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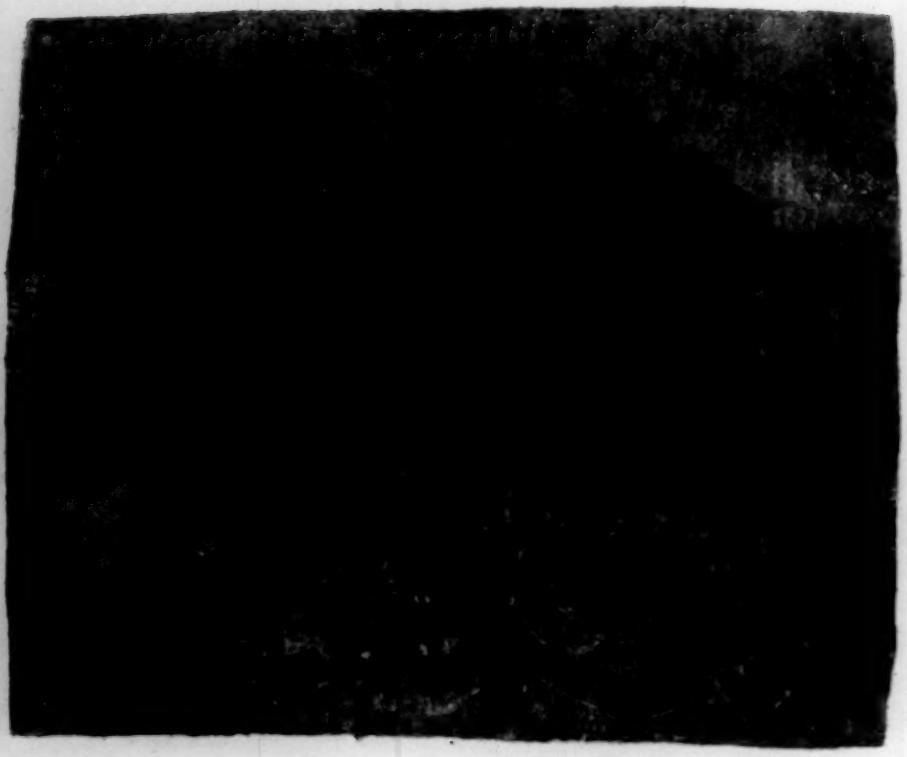

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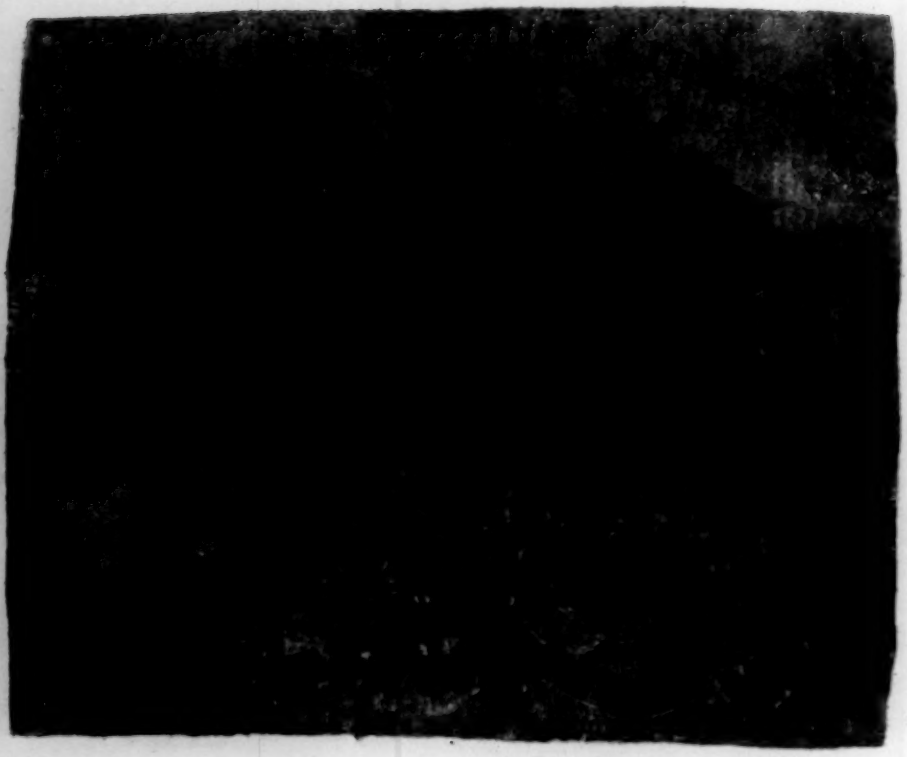

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THE

Solemn Injunction.

A NOVEL.

BRITISH MUSEUM

5112

THE

SOLEMN

INJUNCTION.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

AGNES MUSGRAVE,

AUTHOR OF CICELY OF RABY, &c.

"In a ſolitary chamber, and midnight hour,
"How many ſtrange events may ariſe."

VOL. I.

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M.DCC.XCVIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

Solemn Injunction.

CHAPTER I.

FOR three ſucceſſive days with ſolemn knolls the bell of St. Mary had announced to the inhabitants of the village of St. Mary's Oak the death of one of the pariſhioners; and now, with deepened ſound, throughout the vale, was heard by each penſive ruſtic, proclaiming that the hour of interment approached.

" Ah! poor Joſhua, (ſighed forth the pious Curate, as old Robin the clerk aſſiſted in putting on his ſurplice) ah! poor Joſhua, thy grey hairs have been brought with ſorrow to the grave." A thick ſhower of ſnow was falling as the proceſſion reached the church gates, and covered the head of the good prieſt, who, with much devotion, preceded the corpſe, performing the laſt ſolemn office. Now they paſſed through the lowly porch—the ſervice continued—the pſalm was ſung by voices which trembled with unaffected grief;—now they pauſed, and loud ſobs broke the dead ſilence.—Again the proceſſion mov'd, the coffin was lowered, and duſt was reſigned to duſt. " Oh! give me way! I will not be held! (and a young and beauteous maiden, in all the wild delirium of grief, ſprung forward and leaped into the grave) oh! cover me, hide me, fatherleſs, motherleſs, friendleſs!" ſhe exclaimed, as ſhe ſunk in a ſtrong convulſive fit on the coffin.

At

At that inſtant, from amongſt the gaping and wonder-ſtruck crowd, ſprung a perſon, ſtranger to all, whoſe noble and commanding air awed the ruſtic beholders. Aided by Mr. Hammond, the curate, he lifted out the lovely, but apparently dying Eliza, who was carried into the parſonage, which was near at hand. Soon after ſhe opened her large wild blue eyes on thoſe buſied in her recovery, and looking on Mr. Hammond, faintly ſaid, "ah! now who is there living who cares for me! who now will harbour the friendleſs Eliza!"

"Fear not, my good child, (ſaid the worthy parſon) God will raiſe you up freſh friends in lieu of thoſe he has ſeen fitting you ſhould part from."

"Yes, (exclaimed the ſtranger, with a wild and agitated air) yes, I will! God has ſent me to protect you—Alicia herſelf bids me—yes, I will harbour thee, gentle maiden, and though all the world forſake you, I will not."

The elegant perſon and handſome features of the ſtranger, over which ſorrow had caſt a deep ſhade that well accorded with his ſable dreſs, at firſt ſight ſtruck Mr. Hammond with ſurpriſe; but the vehement, yet melting tone of voice with which he ſpoke, further rouſed his curioſity, and fearing he might alarm Eliza, he propoſed leaving her.

No ſooner were they in Mr. Hammond's ſtudy, (whither he conducted the ſtranger) than, at his requeſt, thoſe circumſtances were related which had plunged the beauteous Eliza into ſuch ſevere diſtreſs.

"It is, (ſaid the good Curate) I think ten years agone, laſt May, when Joſhua Wetherall took a farm in this pariſh; his family then conſiſted of a young woman his daughter, whoſe name was Joice, a ſon nearly of the ſame age, and this poor girl, then about five years old; ſhe was ſuppoſed his grand-child, and called Joice mother; but whether ſhe was really ſo, or only her aunt, I cannot ſay; if the daughter of Joice ſhe muſt

muſt have been an illegitimate one, as both father and daughter bore the ſame name.—About two years ago Joice quitted her father's houſe; he never gave a reaſon for her departure, nor ever ſaid what was become of her. Twelve months ago Thomas, who was a ſad graceleſs lad, after he had ſpent all he could get from the poor old man, enliſted into the train of artillery, and ſoon after was ſent to America. Joſhua's heart was almoſt broke at parting with him, nor has he ever held up his head ſince. He had before this been obliged to quit Woodcraft farm, and at the time Thomas left him, he lived in a cottage at St. Mary's Oak, which, except to church on Sunday, or prayer days, he ſeldom quitted. I ſaw he was bowed to the earth by his afflictions, and wiſhed at leaſt to talk to him regarding Betſey, whom I hoped to be able to recommend to thoſe who could aſſiſt her, for my means are limited. Stopping him, therefore, one day by the church wall, I entered into diſcourſe with him, bade him not de-

ſpond, but truſt in that power who had lengthened out his days. 'I am an old man, Mr. Hammond, and have through my long life met with various trials, ſevere afflictions, all which I have borne, by God's grace; but now I cannot bear misfortunes as formerly, and this poor unfortunate lad,—indeed, Mr. Hammond, my heart is almoſt broke; all I had is gone, and ſoon the pariſh muſt ſupport me; and then, this dear child, my dear little Betſey, I wiſh to ſpeak to you, ſir, about her. I have oft meditated to do ſo, but always ſomething or other prevented me, but to-morrow I will open my mind to you about her.' I then ſaid, come to-morrow, and eat a bit of mutton with me, and we ſhall have leiſure to talk matters over. Sir Robert Bertram, whoſe tenant you were, did he know your ſituation, would do ſomething for you; Eliza is a good girl, and a clever notable houſewife, can write a good hand, and knows ſufficient of arithmetic for ſuch a ſituation, and I think Lady Bertram may, perhaps, take

take her into the family as houſekeeper.—No, ſhe is too young for that, her own maid, or to wait upon Maſter Bertram, who is a ſweet boy; or there is a little Miſs lately come and will want attendants. The old man burſt into tears: 'You are far too good, Mr. Hammond, but to-morrow, pleaſe God, I will ſee you, and then'—— Joſhua ſhook his head, graſped my hand, prayed for bleſſings on me, and croſſed the green to his own houſe; but Joſhua never ſaw the morrow.

"Eliza met him at the door, all ſpirits; 'Gueſs, grandfather, what I have got;' 'What, my dear?' 'Well, Dick Hobſon has juſt been here, and look, he has brought from the North Oak poſt-office this letter; it has come, they told him, from America, I am ſure it is from Uncle Thomas.' Joſhua took it—glanced his eyes over the contents—it dropped from his hand—'he is dead!' he exclaimed; and death, which with ſlow and ſilent ſteps had long been advancing, now ſeized his feeble pulſe, and he ſunk from his

ſeat. The ſcreams of Eliza ſoon brought aſſiſtance, but all human aid was vain.—Joſhua had paid the debt we all muſt pay ſooner or later."

"Beauteous, young, and unprotected! Yes, I will be her protector; it ſhall be ſo, Mr. Hammond,"

During the evening the good parſon made ſome attempts to learn where the ſtranger had came from, or what conveyance he had to St. Mary's.

"I ſcarce know (ſaid he) where I came from, and ſtill leſs do I know whither I ſhall go next. Sometimes I am in a chaiſe, ſometimes, and that in the worſt weather, I am on foot, and in the pedeſtrian ſtyle I reached St. Mary's."

"You choſe, indeed, bad weather for walking, ſir, for I ſcarce ever remember a heavier fall of ſnow than we have had for two days; you muſt not, however, quit my roof to-night, for the roads are, by this time,

time, choaked up; to-morrow, by day-light, if needful, your journey may be purſued."

"No, (ſaid the ſtranger, riſing), nor to-morrow will I purſue my journey; your hoſpitality ſhall ſhelter me, till you unite my fate to Eliza's; ſhe ſhall, Mr. Hammond, ſhe muſt be mine."

The vehement and hurried accents in which the ſtranger ſpoke, made the good clergyman ſuppoſe he was in a ſtate of intoxication, and to this he attributed the proffer ſo haſtily and raſhly made. Finding to oppoſe was but to irritate, he endeavoured to wave the diſcourſe; and, at an early hour, even for the inhabitants of the quiet village of St. Mary's Oak, propoſed retiring for the night. To this his gueſt agreed, but was heard traverſing his chamber almoſt the whole of the night. In the morning he however appeared more compoſed, and Mr. Hammond hoped the fumes of intoxication were diſpelled.

Eliza was ſeated by her good friend, when his gueſt entered. With much native grace ſhe roſe, and paid her reſpects to him; a deep ſenſe of grief clouded her ſweet and gentle countenance, which was ſuffuſed with bluſhes that chaſed each other over her ſnowy neck, as the ſtranger, with anxious tenderneſs, inquired after her health. When they had breakfaſted, ſhe declared her wiſh to return home.

Mr. Hammond was now under the neceſſity of informing her ſhe no longer had a home; every article of furniture was ſeized whilſt the funeral was in church, and her clothes were already removed to the parſonage. Eliza appeared as if petrified by this intelligence, whilſt it was relating, but to this ſtate of ſtupor tears and a ſtrong hyſteric ſucceeded.

The ſtranger, learning the name and reſidence of the ſurgeon of the village, was the meſſenger who ſummoned him to the aſſiſtance

ance of Eliza; who, ere they reached the parſonage, was ſo far recovered as to feel aſhamed of the trouble ſhe had been the cauſe of, and begged Mr. Hammond would allow her to retire, as the ſtranger entered.

"I am ſorry, (ſaid Mr. Kirby) heartily ſorry, parſon, for this poor girl; ſhe has far too much beauty, and, beſides, has never been uſed to labour; and, indeed, it would be a pity ſhe ſhould be expoſed to it; yet, unleſs Sir Robert or my Lady, who are both very good to any body in diſtreſs, I do not know of any one who would be able to recommend her, as an upper ſervant, and Betſey is not fit for ſuch a ſervice as ſhe might have in this neighbourhood."

"She ſhall not, Mr. Kirby, be turned adrift, (replied his friend) ſhe ſhall ſtay here till we can do ſomething or other for her; by May Sir Robert will be at Malieveren, and it would be only two days journey if we were, one of us, to take her to Lady Ber-

tram; then, when ſhe ſaw her, ſhe would know better what ſhe might ſuit."

"True, true parſon, you are right; ſo ſhe would; was ſhe to ſee her I am ſure ſhe would do ſomething.—Then ſo good as ſhe was to poor old Joſhua—oh! her Ladyſhip will conſider all that."

This converſation was interrupted by the return of the ſtranger, who, after Eliza had quitted the room, had been traverſing with haſty ſteps an adjoining apartment, and now renewed his offers of protection for the lovely maiden.

"My name (ſaid he) is Bouchier; to you my family ſignifies not; mean or illuſtrious, my actions can alone degrade, can alone confer honour.—Suffice it then for you, I have wherewith to beſtow on Eliza thoſe comforts various cauſes have deprived her of; I muſt ſeek to ſtill the ſenſe of my woes, by relieving thoſe of others—I have loſt all that rendered life deſirable. I was wandering, if poſſible,

poſſible, from all I knew—from all the officiouſneſs of friendſhip—from myſelf—when Providence guided me to St. Mary's, as you, Mr. Hammond, were performing the laſt ſolemn ſervice for Eliza's aged parent. I followed into the church—ſorrow is congenial to me—light and ſunſhine have long been obnoxious; amidſt ſtorms and tempeſt, ſurrounded by miſery and deſolation, (for ſuch now appears to me the world) I would dwell.—Here I thought nature muſt ſhew herſelf; I ſhould behold grief, like my own, unfettered by the cuſtoms, the odious forms of the gay world.—The impreſſive ſolemnity of your manner, Mr. Hammond, the indiſtinct and mournful voices of the reſponſers filled my ſoul with all the ſoftneſs of ſorrow; the voices ceaſed, and the heart-rending ſighs of Eliza filled their place.—I ſaw her—oh, yes! at that moment had I not painfully reſtained myſelf—yes! at that moment I ſhould have claſped her to my heart.—I thought again I beheld the dear ſaint—that ſhe herſelf had deſcended to

calm the tranſports of my ſoul!—Ah! ſure I was not wrong!—ſure Eliza is doomed to be mine, and that by her means again ſhall the wretched Frederic know peace."

"Conſider, ſir, what importance the ſtep is which you are about to take; you are amenable to thoſe friends of whoſe kind officiouſneſs you ſpeak."

"I am not, Mr. Hammond, amenable to any friends—I hold not ſuch to exiſt—I am my own maſter—and am alone the proper judge of my actions."

"As yet, Mr. Bouchier, you know not Eliza ſufficiently to be able to judge whether ſhe is calculated to render you happy or no. In years ſhe is little above childhood, and though yet a very good girl, may not ſo ſudden an exaltation make her forget herſelf? Your air, your manner, prove you entitled to an exalted rank in life; Eliza's deſcent I know little of, but what I do know, which alone is the relations I have ſpoke of, prove her of rank infinitely beneath, (if I gueſs right) that you fill. Can

you, then, firmly ſtand the laugh of your equals, the ſneers of thoſe beneath you? Will not the world at large cenſure your choice?"

"For her I will, at leaſt for a time, abjure the world; with her, if I return to it, her beauty ſhall be its wonder, and her virtue my happineſs—my defence againſt the weak—the wicked and the vain—who ſhall dare to cenſure?"

"I applaud you, ſir, (ſaid Mr. Kirby, who as yet had not ſpoke, but now, advancing, ſhook Mr. Bouchier moſt cordially by the hand) I applaud you, ſir, for your generous ſentiment in regard to Betſey; was I a few years younger, or was I a few hundreds richer, I would marry her myſelf. I perceive you are an eccentric character; ſo the people of St. Mary's reckon me, and as I don't think either of us as yet have aſked her the queſtion, why perhaps I may, ſhould I change my mind, have as good a chance as you, who ſeem to make ſo ſure about it; and

and perhaps ſhe may not be in a marrying humour."

"Oh! tell me not ſhe will refuſe me; it is not—it cannot be poſſible, for ſure it is the gentle ſoul of my ſainted Alicia that beams through the eyes of Eliza—which lights up her countenance—no! ſhe will not refuſe me.—I tell you, Mr. Kirby, I charge you, ſir, do not irritate me by ſuch ideas; ſhe ſhall, ſhe muſt be mine! Again ſhe points out happineſs; Eliza ſhall be ſheltered by my care. But it is my Alicia, reſtored all lovely and blooming as when firſt ſheltered amidſt rocks and woods I beheld her; Haſte! lead me to her, let me declare my love!" He ſtarted, pauſed, and ſighed. "Alas! do I then again love! No, Mr. Hammond, I will not deceive her, I love her not.—No! it is but the ſemblance of my loſt Alicia I love; this heart is incapable of love, it is dead even to the calls of friendſhip. Yet give Eliza to me, (he continued, in a ſoft and ſupplicating tone) I will be to her

her—yes, I will be to her a friend, a tender and indulgent friend."

The expreſſive countenance of Mr. Bouchier had undergone many changes; he trembled in every limb, his eyes had been dimmed by tears, had melted with love, and ſparkled with rage. Mr. Hammond and his friend Kirby withdrew, ſaying they would prepare Eliza to receive his propoſals.

"What would you adviſe this poor girl to do, in regard to this ſtranger's offers," ſaid Mr. Hammond, with an enquiring and irreſolute look.

"Pſhaw! adviſe! why we had better adviſe nothing about the matter. If we ſay refuſe, I am certain ſhe will; but how ſhall we be ſure that would be agreeable to what already Betſey feels in her own heart for a man whoſe elegant manners, fine perſon, and handſome face might well win the affections of a girl that had ſeen more men than

than poor Betſey has; and I think few ſuch men as Mr. Bouchier will come to St. Mary's, or if here, would like him, intereſt themſelves for her. True, you will tell me he is a ſtranger, but at her age it is not to be ſuppoſed love waits, and peeps, and conſiders, and then ſays 'no, I have not known you long enough.'—Ah! parſon, parſon, you have forgot thoſe days; and if we, with our prudence, ſhould biaſs the poor girl, againſt the dictates of her own heart, to refuſe ſo advantageous an offer, may ſhe not, with reaſon, lay all inconveniences ſhe may hereafter ſuſtain to our charge?"

"But, Mr. Kirby, how ſhall we be certified that Betſey, by marrying Mr. Bouchier, will avoid ſuch? we cannot aſſure ourſelves he has a fortune to provide for her; upon his bare aſſertion is the poor girl to rely? I think, doctor, it is a deſperate remedy you propoſe."

"I can ſee, and ſo may you, Mr. Bouchier is a gentleman, and I dare wager all I am worth in the world, judging, I ſay judging, Mr.

Mr. Hammond, from his countenance, from his eagerneſs to relieve her,—that he would do harm to no one, that he is good, generous, kind to all he is connected with, and that he would ſcorn to marry if he could not provide for her. No, no, Betſey's ſituation is deſperate enough, but I never preſcribe deſperate remedies, as you call them."

"You are ſo ſanguine, Mr. Kirby, and I hope you may be right; but (continued he, in a kind of whiſper, and patting his forehead) I doubt, doctor, all is not quite clear here; ſuch ſudden impulſes, ſuch quick changes of ſpirit, and an air of wildneſs which ſhifts to melancholy, beſpeak a derangement of intellect."

"Pſhaw! all ſtuff, all nonſenſe, Mr. Hammond, (ſaid Kirby, with an impatient tone) becauſe you ſee this man a ſtranger, and ſee him not exactly like the folks of your own pariſh, why you ſuppoſe, I find, he is crazy, juſt as the wiſeacres of St. Mary's Oak ſaid twice or thrice of me, when I, without regarding their idle goſſip, did what I had

I had a right to do, and what I would do again if required. Then it was, you may remember, "Lord guide us, the Doctor for ſartain is gone by himſelf!" But you, Mr. Hammond, though almoſt the only one in the pariſh that did ſay ſo, declared I had acted a commendable part, and told my accuſers "Charity would cover a multitude of ſins" Aye, aye, ſo it may, ſaid I, in the other world, but here it ſeems but to expoſe them; for I dare ſay I never did a wrong thing, or a fooliſh one, that was not talked of then, and ſome ſins were laid to my door I was guiltleſs of."

Whilſt the converſation, of which I have related a part, was paſſing between her friend, Eliza had quitted her chamber, more compoſed and reſigned to her fate, and in expectation of ſeeing Mr. Hammond, and to entreat his advice. She was on her road to the ſtudy, when Mr. Bouchier, who was traverſing with hurried ſteps, the apartment in which he awaited its owners return,

ſaw

ſaw the fair object of his meditation paſs, and begged ſhe would favor him a few minutes with her company, as he had ſomewhat of importance to communicate.

Eliza ſuffered Mr. Bouchier to lead her in.

" Mr. Hammond has, my gentle girl, I ſuppoſe informed you of my wiſhes; I hope you have not refuſed."

" I have not ſeen him, ſir, ſince I ſaw you, but whatever was the requeſt, I cannot heſitate to comply; God forbid I ſhould think of oppoſing Mr. Hammond's wiſhes, which muſt be for my good."

The friends of Eliza now made their appearance.

" Betſey, my dear, I hope you are better," ſaid Mr. Kirby.

" O yes, much better, ſir, I thank you."

" I ſuppoſe, Eliza, (ſaid Mr. Hammond, as he ſeated her by himſelf) I ſuppoſe Mr. Bouchier.

Bouchier has himſelf declared his intentions to you."

"Mr. Bouchier (ſaid the unconſcious girl) has told me he had made you, ſir, the bearer of ſome requeſt to me; I ſhould be very ungrateful for all his kindneſs did I demur, if in any way I can ſhow him the poor Eliza has not an ungrateful heart.—Pray tell me his requeſt."

Mr. Kirby caſt a kind of triumphant and ſignificant look towards his friend, which ſeemed to ſay, did I not tell you at her age love never conſidered whether it was a ſtranger or no;—all's done by ſurpriſe.

Mr. Bouchier had, as they entered, ſprung out, and was now, (though it was neither calm nor clear, but as bad a day as November could produce) walking in the church-yard, which was ſome feet deep in ſnow.

"I preſume not, my good girl, to influence you in a matter which ſo nearly concerns

cerns your future happineſs, nor think that to avoid any little trouble I may have to take regarding you, that I, at Mr. Bouchier's requeſt, inform you of his wiſhes, that if you refuſe not, he means to make you his wife. He tells me he has it in his power to ſhield you from the diſtreſs that poverty may involve you in; but be not raſh to determine either way. Mr. Bouchier is a ſtranger here, and known to no one; his manners undoubtedly beſpeak the gentleman, but even rank in life and wealth are inſufficient to ſecure happineſs. Mr. Bouchier may have many faults, or even vices, at beſt his diſpoſition is unſteady, and this very propoſal proves him raſh; yet, I think, ſituated as you are, an offer apparently ſo generous ought not to be haſtily rejected. Without fortune, almoſt without friends, (for I have heard you ſay you knew no relation you had) young and totally inexperienced, poſſeſſing too perſonal charms that muſt expoſe you to much hazard in a world to which, as yet, you are a ſtranger, and where your friends at

St.

St. Mary's have it not in their power to be any protection; and it ſeems to me as if Providence had ſent you a protector. If you reſolve to accept of Mr. Bouchier as ſuch, we will endeavour to learn more of him, his character and connexions, but you ſhall not leave this houſe till we do; but if, Eliza, your heart declares not in the favor of this ſtranger, and you decline his offer, and reſolve to live prudent and diligent in the ſtation in which it has pleaſed the Almighty to place you, we will not, my dear child, forſake you.

Mr. Hammond pauſed, and fixed his eyes on the bluſhing and aſtoniſhed Eliza, who appeared as if collecting the courage which had forſook her.

"You ſpeak not, Betſey."

"Ah, ſir, adviſe me, counſel me, I will indeed be governed by you."

"Do take your own way, my dear girl, (ſaid Mr. Kirby) the parſon ſays and then unſays;

unſays; take my word you will never, the longeſt day you have to live, meet with ſuch another offer: 'leave St. Mary Oak!' no, I hope not, till you are Mrs. Bouchier. No fear, if you were ſeen, you would be admired, and followed, and flattered, and the fellows, fine gentlemen too, would call you angel and goddeſs; and, and why Betſey they will turn your little brain, and from being a very good girl, though neither ſaint or angel, they will never ceaſe, if you will liſten, till they have made a devil of you."

Eliza, though well accuſtomed to ſuch-like rhapſodies from Kirby, gave him a look which ſeemed to intimate at once her diſpleaſure at the laſt metaphor of his ſpeech; and alſo that he could ſuppoſe ſhe would lend a willing ear to ſuch people as he deſcribed.

"Nay, Betſey, do not be offended. What, though you are a good, nay a very good girl at St. Mary's, it might all happen;

and you have heard me ſay before now, I thought the better half of the women are the very devil upon earth."

" Fye, fye, ſhame Doctor on you, (ſaid the charitable Hammond) thoſe aſſertions do not become you, they diſgrace you.—I ſay, only for my ſhare of knowledge of the ſex, that I have met with more worthy, more amiable women than you could produce men; and have we not numerous examples in ſacred, as well as prophane hiſtory, that virtuous women have exiſted in all ages worthy of record?"

" Sacred hiſtory, parſon! nay, now you tread upon unſafe ground; quote it not; every book furniſhes ſome inſtance of their depravity.—No, it clearly condems them in the firſt page, aye in all ages, from grandam Eve, with her curſed curioſity, to this preſent day."

" Doctor, doctor, hear me but ſpeak."—

This diſpute would have laſted, as it generally did, till every illuſtrious, virtuous, and

and every celebrated, or infamous woman, recorded in ancient hiſtory, had been named and diſcuſſed, had not Eſther, the good parſon's old houſekeeper, come to inform her maſter Mr. Bouchier wiſhed to ſee him.

" What is it then, Eliza, I am to ſay ?"

" Oh! tell him I admire, I eſteem, I love him ; his friendſhip ſhall never be forgotten ; the generous ſtranger ſhall ever be remembered; for him ſhall my prayers importune Heaven.—But marry! ah, no, Mr. Hammond, I cannot marry him.—I wiſh I was his ſiſter, I wiſh I was his daughter, that I might look for ever on him without bluſhing, that I might attend on him and prevent his wiſhes ; but tell him, oh tell him, I cannot, indeed I cannot marry him."

" You had better tell him then, Betſey, yourſelf; Mr. Bouchier may take it more patiently from you."

" No, I cannot, I muſt not ſee him again—indeed I dare not refuſe him ; but you, my dear Mr. Hammond, or you, Mr.

Kirby, as a favour I beg you to ſay to Mr. Bouchier, I decline his generous propoſal."

"No, no, (ſaid Kirby, clapping her ſhoulder, and archly nodding to Mr Hammond) you had better tell him yourſelf; it will not appear grateful, or indeed barely civil, on ſuch an occaſion to ſend a meſſage."

Eliza's friends left her, and no ſooner was ſhe alone, than a plentiful ſhower of tears relieved her full heart.

CHAPTER II.

WERE they tears of joy, of grief, of gratitude, or love? I believe, gentle reader, all those emotions were conjoined to produce the conflict Eliza felt.—Ere they were dried from her rosy cheeks Mr. Bouchier entered.

"Eliza, do you then (said he) refuse me? I had flattered myself—I thought that you possessed a soul congenial with my own, and hoped, fondly hoped, that by contributing to your happiness I should have drawn the stranger back to myself—but you refuse

me, Eliza! Again, then, am I doomed to wander forth a miſerable fugitive from home, from friends once dear to me; you too I muſt leave, and leave you, Eliza, with a friend whoſe limited powers makes him an unfit protector. Mr. Hammond has a family, which all his œconomy muſt be barely ſufficient to provide for."

"Ah! Mr. Bouchier, would to Heaven I could contribute to your comfort: that I might be the means of reſtoring you to happineſs would cheer the poor Eliza under every difficulty; but ſhe muſt not, cannot be your wife."

The converſation ended as it had began, without profeſſions of love on the ſide of Mr. Bouchier, and without any ſigns of averſion on that of Eliza.

"I ſhould like, (ſaid Mr. Bouchier, who yet was a gueſt at the parſonage) I ſhould like to take a houſe in this neighbourhood."

"There

" There is a houſe at North Oak, which is our market town, untenanted at preſent, it is large and convenient."

" No, Mr. Hammond, I ſhould not like a town: what I wiſh is a houſe retired, where I ſhall be free from interruption, and from impertinent remarks on my conduct."

" Then (ſaid Kirby) I think we can ſuit you; the hall at Oakdale"——

" I thought you had taken it, Doctor, for Mrs. Swainſton, and her ſiſter, Mrs. Nancy."

" Two whimſical old creatures! ſo I did; but who would ever do any thing for a woman, eſpecially for old maids? Never do they know their own minds; now it is over far from church in winter time, the river is not always fordable, and to go round by the bridge lengthens the way; but all that is mere ſham, for I believe the true reaſon is, the report of the houſe being haunted has frightened them."

" Ridiculous, it is not poſſible; why Mrs. Nancy Swainſton was always reckoned

a ſenſible woman, and I am amazed ſhe ſhould give way to ſuch follies."

"Well, ſir, this ſenſible woman, as you call her, told me very ſeriouſly ſhe could not think it was Dame Dorothy that diſturbed the houſe, for ſhe had been talking about her to ſome that knew the characters of all the family; 'but (ſaid ſhe) Mr. Kirby, during the civil wars between Charles I. and the Republicans, it is ſaid ſtrange things were acted at Oakdale hall:' after which ſhe told me of that lady of the Bertram family, and Lord Marſham of Thorpe, yet ſtill not perfectly aſſured who was the ghoſt; talked of its having haunted the hall ever ſince Sir Philip Bertram's time. So I ſaid, then you had far better go into the hall, and if you ſhould ſee it, in as civil a way as you can, enquire its name and addreſs. Want of faith on this ſcore, I believe, has loſt me one of my beſt patients; however, Mr. Bouchier, if the houſe ſuits you, I will give bail for the ghoſt. I have a better opinion of the progenitors

genitors of our good Baronet than to ſuppoſe they would riſe from their graves to diſturb you."

"The houſe, if retired, ſaid Mr. Bouchier, (and this fooliſh report beſpeaks it ſo) will ſuit my diſpoſition."

"My horſe is at your ſervice; I have ſome viſits to make in the village, and I dare ſay the parſon will go with you; he is fitter than I am to encounter the ghoſts."

This affair being ſettled, Mr. Hammond and his new friend ſet out together, and after a ſhort ride reached Oakdale hall, by whoſe gates the road lay, but ſo carefully had it been concealed by its ſtately owners from the gaze of the paſſengers, that little was ſeen from the road but the roof and chimneys of the houſe. A double row of limes that had been kept lopped and pruned, till art triumphing over nature had deprived them of beauty, pointed out the principal entrance, which was through two lofty gates,

ſupported by a high wall, whoſe maſſy thickneſs might have ſtood a ſiege from the battering rams of antiquity.

In vain for ſome time did Mr. Hammond aſſault the ſolid gates with the but end of his whip.—" I wiſh, (ſaid he) either Martha or her daughter may be within ; but if you will wait a little, Mr. Bouchier, I will go round by the back court, and ſee if they are to be found." Soon after the heavy bolt was drawn back, and, ſlowly creaking on their ruſty hinges, the gates opened. " You ſee I have got entrance, though without Martha's aſſiſtance."

The court into which Mr. Bouchier entered was covered with ſnow, on which no human foot had trod, ſave Mr. Hammond's ; above the ſnow roſe, at the corner of the graſs plot, on each ſide of the way up to the houſe, a yew tree, cut in a conic form ; as high as the firſt ſtory, the now ſapleſs branches of ſome ſpreading jeſſamine, intermingled

mingled with woodbine, hung laden with ſnow. The houſe appeared, from the ſtyle of architecture, to have been built in Queen Elizabeth's or James the firſt's time, when the nobility and gentry, finding the maſſy gothic caſtle no longer needful for their ſafety, reared buildings in another form; yet, ſtill attached to that heavy ſpecies of magnificence, ſeemed reluctantly to abandon it, and the hall which ſucceeded the caſtle partook of the defects of the former ſtyle, yet was diveſted of that air of impoſing grandeur attached to the baronial caſtles.—Thus the outſide of Oakdale hall exhibited high arched windows, and ſmall ſquares of glaſs, ſet in lead, looſened by time from their faſtenings, and flapping too and fro with the wind. Two projecting wings were crowned with peaked turrets; in one of thoſe wings a glaſs door announced the principal entrance, but this was faſtened, as was alſo another, at which, after a few loud knocks, an old woman appeared.

"I thought, (ſaid Mr. Hammond) you had left the old hall to itſelf"

"No, ſir, I hope I ſhall never leave it till I die; I am ſure Sir Robert will never turn me out."

"Never, without providing for you, Martha; but I have brought a gentleman to Oakdale to take a look at it, who has thoughts of renting it."

"I wiſh he may, for it is a great pity nobody lives in it; there has been ſeveral come to look at it ſince Sir Robert talked of letting it, and always ſomething or other happens. This, ſir, (turning to Mr. Bouchier) is the hall; look at that beautiful window, the coats of arms painted on it are thoſe of the families into which the Bertrams have married, ſince Reginald Baron Oakdale, whoſe Lady was of royal extraction; there you may ſee their arms upon the higheſt panes.—The armour that hangs round was taken mouldy out of the old caſtle, and was put up here in Sir Philip Bertram's time;

time; ſee that noble looking man, with the large whiſkers, that is his picture."

Martha was not got a third part through her ſtory, when Mr. Hammond complained it was very cold, and begged ſhe would proceed to ſhew the houſe.

"I was never thinking about the cold, talking away; but I can tell the gentleman all about it after."

Martha now, followed by Mr. Bouchier and Hammond, led the way through the apartments, ſome of which were large, but all wore, except in one wing, the ſame gloomy appearance; the ſtaircaſe and floors were of black oak, with which many of the rooms were alſo lined; the furniture was heavy, and had been coſtly: ſome apartments were hung with rich tapeſtry or damaſk hangings to correſpond with the beds, the high cornices of which were many of them gilded, though from the tarniſh years had given

given, no brightneſs relieved the ſombre that reigned undiſturbed by any appearance of cheerfulneſs, or ought that ſhewed like comfort.—The thickneſs of the walls, and the ſmall panes of glaſs ſet in lead, were almoſt ſufficient to exclude the light, whilſt the fruit trees on the ſide next the garden, and the jeſſamine on the front to the court, equally proved in ſummer a leafy ſcreen, ſcarcely penetrated by the ray of the ſun. In the wing that much more than half a century ago had been modernized, the windows were ſaſhed, and the furniture not ſo antique; by Martha they were conſidered as the very model of elegance, being fitted up only, ſhe ſaid, when Sir Henry, the preſent baronet's grandfather, was married, and his ſon was the laſt of the family who ever reſided in them, and that only for a ſhort time.

" This manſion, (ſaid Mr. Bouchier on his return) well accords with my taſte; in it I can ſhut out the world, and live to myſelf, and if Eliza yet would conſent to ſhare my ſoli-

tude, I think all the happineſs I can ever enjoy would be mine."

It was ſoon ſettled application ſhould be made to Sir Robert's ſteward; at preſent he had not one at Oakdale; but Mr. Kirby offered to go to Bertram Caſtle himſelf, where Mr. Jackſon had removed, as the baronet was making alterations there which required the ſteward's preſence.

"I will pay (ſaid Mr. Bouchier) a year's rent in advance. I am a ſtranger here, and without ſome ſecurity Sir Robert may be diſpleaſed at his agent."

Mr. Bouchier drew out a Bank of England bill for 200l. and gave to Kirby, begging a leaſe might be drawn for ſix or nine years.

The number of bills from amongſt which this was taken, ſerved to convince both Mr. Hammond and the benevolent ſurgeon, that the

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the ſtranger was a man of property, and both agreed it would be a great pity Eliza ſhould refuſe ſuch an offer.

Mr. Kirby, after an abſence of four days, returned; Oakdale Hall was let to Mr. Bouchier, and a leaſe was to be ſent for Sir Robert to ſign in a few days. The ſtranger therefore quitted the parſonage, and took poſſeſſion of Oakdale; ſo urgent were his friends with Eliza in his behalf, and ſo powerfully did her own heart plead for Mr. Bouchier, that ſhe ſuffered Mr. Hammond, the firſt viſit he made at St. Mary's after his removal, to inform him Eliza no longer objected. From herſelf he liſtened to a confirmation of this, and then furniſhed his friends with money and directions to purchaſe furniture for the beſt apartments, and the carriage and horſes of a gentleman who had lived at ſome little diſtance.

A month from the interment of poor Joſhua, Eliza Wetherall became Mrs. Bouchier.

chier. The conduct of Mr. Bouchier on that day was marked, as all his actions were, with a wild eccentricity.—He came from Oakdale in his own chaise, he was married in black clothes, and the instant the ceremony was over, without assigning any reason, or saying whither he went, he threw himself into a chaise and four and drove away. At the hall an elegant dinner was provided, which Mr. Hammond and Kirby partook of with Mrs. Bouchier.

A week elapsed without news of the bridegroom. On the eighth day of his absence he returned, but yet said not what road he had been, or any thing regarding his journey, except that he had scarce ever been out of a carriage since he quitted St. Mary's. Mr. Bouchier brought back with him a choice selection of books, and he devoted his whole time to the improvement of his young and beautiful bride, who made a rapid progress under her beloved instructer, who appeared no longer subject to those hasty impulses of passion,

paſſion, nor to ſink under melancholy depreſſion, as he had when he firſt came to St. Mary's, and which bore to Mr. Hammond the appearance of inſanity; for then, if oppoſed, his paſſions flamed out with a violence that if it was not abſolute madneſs, ſure nearly approached it. Now he was mild and gentle, yet appeared to poſſeſs a nobleneſs of ſpirit that towered above that littleneſs which mark alike the proud and oſtentatious, and the abject minded. Mr. Bouchier ſeemed poſſeſſed of uncommon enthuſiaſm, and ſenſibility of character, from which diſtinguiſhing traits he had doubtleſs ſuffered much; yet were they not deadened by his ſufferings, although he had arrived at an age when men who have a free intercourſe with the world generally laugh at ſuch boyiſh ideas, for Mr. Bouchier appeared to be thirty or upwards.

In the pleaſing employment of cultivating the talents of Eliza, in watching the unfolding of her ideas, and in giving her a taſte

taſte for muſic and painting, along with ſtudy, Mr. Bouchier ſeemed almoſt to forget he had come to Oakdale reſolved to nurſe his ſorrows.—Nature ſeemed to wear another face, all creation ſmiled, and he loved Eliza now for herſelf; not as he did when to protect from miſery a face and form whoſe imaginary reſemblance to a beloved object was a claim he could not reſiſt, and to guard her from diſtreſs ſeemed to give a pleaſure nought beſide could impart.

Thus, in calm retirement, Mr. Bouchier paſſed his time, and ſeemed to have regained tranquillity, if not perfect happineſs. Eliza was his ſole object; whatever he was engaged in ſhe was the ſpring that directed his actions.

CHAPTER III.

THUS paſſed away the blooming months of ſpring; and thus, unheeded by Eliza, wore away autumn. The roads grew bad, the trees were deſpoiled of their foilage, the garden had loſt its charms, except that its ſpacious gravel walks allowed that exerciſe which both were partial to, and which at that ſeaſon no other place round Oakdale afforded.

The worthy Mr. Hammond, and his friend the ſurgeon, oft viſited at the hall, where

where, beſides themſelves, no one was admitted on thoſe terms. The good parſon was not inquiſitive; yet his curioſity was highly rouſed by the air of myſtery which hung over the huſband of Eliza, who ſince his marriage, had never been at St. Mary's Oak.

"Why is it, (ſaid he) my good friend, you come not to church with Eliza; do my doctrines diſpleaſe you? If not of the eſtabliſhed religion, at North Oak there are diſſenting meetings you might attend."

"From the pulpit I am ſatisfied, Mr. Hammond, you will deliver no doctrines that you do not practiſe; and as I converſe with you, and as I inveſtigate your character, I find ſuch amiable leſſons of morality, ſuch a pure ſpirit of Chriſtianity, that I am ſorry it is not in my power to profit by your public teaching. I am of the church of England, and Mrs. Bouchier will vouch for my family obſervance."

But

But it was not alone from church Mr. Bouchier abſented himſelf; when he went beyond the limits of the wood, which ſkirted the gardens, he choſe the moſt unfrequented paths; or if in the chaiſe, as he rode out with Eliza occaſionally on the more public roads, the blinds were always lowered on his ſide.—No letters had ever come for him ſince he went to Oakdale, nor had he ever been known to write to any perſon but once, and that letter was ſent by a ſervant who could not read, to put into the York poſt-office, upwards of fifty miles diſtant. Mr. Kirby or Hammond had tranſacted all his buſineſs ſince he came to the country, and when his ſervants were hired, he deſired ſuch might be choſen as had never been ten miles from St. Mary, and had never been reſident in a town Various were the conjectures that Mr. Bouchier's friends formed concerning him; but as, perhaps, they were all wide from the truth, it is needleſs to trouble my readers with them, who perhaps may know as much of Mr.

Bouchier's

Bouchier's connexions as any body did at St. Mary's; though ſome of its inhabitants, as generally every village of its ſize affords ſuch as have nothing elſe to do but to buſy themſelves in the moſt intereſting way poſſible with their neighbours affairs, took infinite pains to find out who this Mr. Bouchier was that had married Betſey Wetherall; yet, after much enquiry, much kindneſs beſtowed on every domeſtic of the hall for the purpoſe of inveſtigation, all failed; and though many ſuppoſitions were formed, yet they were but ſuppoſitions, for no one could tell who the ſtranger was, or what were his reſources; but all agreed money he had, though no one knew how long it would laſt: at preſent Sir Robert himſelf could not keep a more expenſive table; and who was like her at St. Mary's! who would have thought Betſey would ever ride in her carriage!

Many ſuch like comments were made on the inhabitants of the hall, and many queſ-

tions were aſked Mr. Kirby by his patients on this highly intereſting ſubject.

" Now, pray Doctor, do tell us who is this ſtrange man at the hall? I am ſure you in the ſecret."

" Why, Madam, what the devil have either you or I to do with Mr. Bouchier's family or connexions; and if there is any ſecret, you may reſt aſſured, if I am even entruſted, it ſhall remain one."

On Chriſtmas eve Mr. Hammond viſited Oakdale:

" I am come (ſaid he, to Mr. and Mrs. Bouchier) with good news."

" Good news, Mr. Hammond, (ſaid Mr. Bouchier) from your countenance I was preparing myſelf for the reverſe."

" I am going to quit St. Mary's."

" To quit St. Mary's, ſir? is that good news?" ſaid Eliza.

" I ought to conſider it ſo; I have juſt received an account of my preſentation to a living

living in the dioceſe of Briſtol of 500l. per annum. I am indebted to our worthy Baronet, I ſuppoſe, though the living is not in his gift, but in that of his moſt intimate friend."

Mr. Bouchier then congratulated his friend on his well-deſerved preferment, yet regretted the diſtance to which he would be removed.

"I ought to be thankful for this change of fortune, and hope I ſhall not forget myſelf in eaſier circumſtances; but I feel much at quitting St. Mary's, where, upon 80l. a year, I have lived twenty years contentedly, and I may ſay as happy as moſt men. In that time I married an amiable woman, who after bringing four ſons into the world, quitted it for a better. Time has ſubdued the affliction I then ſuſtained; my ſons are healthy and well diſpoſed; the youngeſt is lately gone to ſea, and the eldeſt I mean for the church. This addition of income perhaps may render them careleſs or diſſipated, and I

fear, Mr. Bouchier, alike for them and myſelf."

On New Year's day Mr. Hammond preached his farewell ſermon, after which he dined at the hall. Mrs. Bouchier preſented him with a pocket book, at her huſband's requeſt, as a token of friendſhip, which he gladly accepted; but to his aſtoniſhment he found, when ſome miles the next day on his journey, that it contained bills for 150l.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was not long after Mr. Hammond had quitted St. Mary's, till Eliza ſaw a great change in Mr. Bouchier; he no longer was her preceptor, no longer hung over her with that fond yet delicate attention which marked his conduct to her hitherto; if ſhe raiſed her eyes to his, they were inſtantly averted, a deep ſigh would follow, and ſhe was left alone; his nights were ſpent chiefly in the open air, walking by moon light in the garden, which was covered with ſnow, or ſhut up, (as indeed he paſſed moſt of the

day) in a room which tradition for ages handed down to be the haunt of ſome reſtleſs ſpirit, whoſe guilty, or perturbed and injured ſhade, was there viſible at times to human perception.

Diſtreſſed at this ſad change, Eliza reſolved no longer to bear it in ſilence, for it was now ſome days ſince Mr. Bouchier had uniformly avoided her.

" Oh! tell me, (ſhe ſaid) kill me not by this cruel ſilence! Oh! tell your Eliza, my beloved Mr. Bouchier, what thus diſtreſſes you! Have I offended? alas! it is far from my heart; but you no longer love me—you avoid me—you deſpiſe me—and deem me unworthy to ſhare your griefs."

" Love you, my Eliza! would to Heaven——but alas! what is it I would ſay!—Could I avert from you, my beloved, the miſery, the agony I feel, my life ſhould be freely ſacrificed; but, lovely, innocent as you are—you muſt ſhare it."

The

The countenance of Mr. Bouchier appeared almoſt convulſed; a deep, an agonized expreſſion ſat on it. Eliza was alarmed, ſhe threw herſelf at his feet—"Allow me then, oh now, to ſhare your ſorrows."

"No, Eliza, not now!—no! not now! ſoon, too ſoon, will they reach you!"

Mr. Bouchier, regardleſs of the poſture his beauteous wife had aſſumed, had, as if to avoid her ſight, thrown his head on the table before him.

"Why not now, my dear ſir, why not intruſt your Eliza? Why, Mr. Bouchier, dignify her with your name; why join with her in the ſacred tie of wedlock, if you deemed her unworthy of the duties it impoſes? Try me, my dear ſir, you will find your pupil worthy of her inſtructor; ſhe will prove herſelf capable of exertion—ſhe will not ſhrink under calamity, if by ſharing ſhe can lighten her huſband's woes."

"Oh! riſe my Eliza, my —— every word pierces me to the heart.—Alas! I muſt not, dare not hear you!"

Mr. Bouchier haſtily roſe, and retired to Sir Philip's room, where he had ſpent, for the laſt few days, ſo large a portion of his time; there he paſſed the remainder of that day and night, nor did the following morning reſtore him to the terrified Eliza, who in vain begged for admittance. Her fears were increaſed as evening advanced; ſhe had ſued, and wept, but no anſwer had ſhe received. Alarmed by the ſilence of Mr. Bouchier, ſhe ſent for Mr. Kirby, who no ſooner learned how long his friend had been ſhut up than he broke open the door, but to the terror and aſtoniſhment of both no one was to be ſeen. Yet that he went into that room was well known, but how he had quitted it was a myſtery no one could unravel. The window was ſhut, and the door was locked, till, broke open, the key yet remained in the lock, to teſtify ſome

perſon

perſon in the room had locked it. The wide chimney, it was true, might afford a paſſage; this therefore was ſearched, as alſo the flat-leaded roof of the centre of the building, but nought afforded any proof that Mr. Bouchier had eſcaped this way; every apartment from the cellar to the garret was examined, and yet no ſigns of him ſo anxiouſly ſought. Again Mr. Kirby viſited Sir Philip's room, a place the ſervants liked not; upon the table he now found two letters, one of which was addreſſed to Mrs. Bouchier, the other, which was as follows, to himſelf:

"Ere I had taken the ſtep I now am about to do, I would have wiſhed to diſcloſe many things to you, had I found I was capable of a connected converſation; but you would have oppoſed, you would have preached patience to a heart, to a ſoul which knows it not. Sure this being is compoſed of jarring atoms; never am I to taſte of permament happineſs! Yet, Kirby,

I have tasted it, but it was dashed from my lips, and days of misery succeeded!—At Oakdale,—yes, my friend, at Oakdale—again I fondly, madly hoped, I had seized the coy stranger, but, Kirby, it was but a phantom—a meteor—blazing but to deceive—which led to horror—to misery—to madness. Seek not, I conjure you, to learn what—seek not to learn who I was.—You are ignorant of my doubts; alas! let me not term them so—they are,—yes, they are, sad certainties of—of—Oh! of what! Is there a name to convey it in?—No, Kirby, buried for ever shall it be.—Infamy—remorse—distraction—what ideas do they convey to you? But weak are words.—Yet, why to a heart which is fraught with benevolence, should I seek to convey a portion of that misery which consumes me—which maddens my weak brain! God of mercy sustain me till——yet how shall I bear the trial? Pardon me—I wander—I meant but to implore your protection for Eliza.

"I have

" I have wrote, ſince I learnt the dreadful ——, ſheets of paper; but they are deſtroyed; they were the ſad effuſions of my ſoul; they were written with a madman's hand.—Alas! is not this alſo? Condemn me not too haſtily; yet, O yet, I may return, —yet I may preſent Eliza to a diſtinguiſhed circle of friends, accompliſhed as ſhe is lovely!—How pleaſing was the employment to cultivate her talents, to contemplate her virtues! Again, perhaps, I may never behold her, but I have taken care ſhe ſhall be amply provided for. To your charge do I commit her—ah! may neither care nor ſorrow come near her! In the ſtrong cheſt that ſtands in the cloſet, through the library, you will find a ſum for preſent uſe. Whatever fate attends the wretched ——, may all evil, all griefs, be far from her."

Mr. Kirby, after having read this ſtrangely incoherent epiſtle, put it, with that to Eliza, into his pocket, and ſought her, and found her ſtretched on the ground, the image

of terror and deſpair. He endeavoured at conſolation.

"Mr. Bouchier had talked for ſome time, (he ſaid) of undertaking a journey of conſiderable length; to ſave you the pain of parting, he has thus ſuddenly abſented himſelf ſecretly."

"Oh! tell me not ſo, Mr. Kirby; rather, if you know it, ſay at once the dreadful truth. Nay, (continued ſhe, riſing, and laying hold of Kirby) nay, at once inform me,—why flatter me with ideal hope? I know ſome dreadful misfortune has overtaken my beloved huſband. Oh! tell me not he has ſecretly withdrawn;—no, it is impoſſible! What, would Mr. Bouchier do this?—plunge me in ſuſpicion—doubt—give me up to keeneſt miſery—to deſpair!" She pauſed, and throwing herſelf on the ſofa,—"No, (ſhe reſumed) no, I will not, I cannot believe it! He who ſeemed but to live for me; every care, every uneaſineſs he chaſed from me.—What! Mr. Bouchier

quit his Eliza! Oh, no! he would not inflict ſuch ſorrow on her!—He, whoſe heart was the throne of every virtue, whoſe eye melted at the tale of diſtant miſery, and whoſe liberal hand has been opened but to draw bleſſings on his head from whoever approached him."

Again ſhe pauſed; again, though his eyes, his countenance, held a far different language, did the worthy ſurgeon of St. Mary's urge various reaſons why ſhe ſhould hope.

" No, Mr. Kirby, (ſhe replied, with unlooked-for firmneſs) no! hope is not for me! I am doomed to miſery, to deſpair; happineſs is fled for ever. Had Mr. Bouchier been in poſſeſſion of himſelf, had he not loſt all command of his actions, now I ſhould not mourn his loſs, I had ſtill been happy; but the myſterious journey upon our marriage day, did it not ſavor of a ſad ſtate of derangement of mind? And then, oft would I

mark his agitated and wild look on the ſad melancholy which oppreſſed him; oft has he left me, fearful of giving pain, till again able to ſee me:—yet theſe ſtarts of mind ſubſided, and months elapſed, and I ſaw them not; but of late my ſociety has been ſhuned. Oh! I ſaw the deep, the painful ſtruggle his noble mind ſuſtained!—Alas! the combat is over; he has flown from me, unable to conquer the malady cauſed by ſome hidden grief.—He has—oh! too ſure I augur truly, he has flown to ſelf-deſtruction."

Mr. Kirby ſaw the juſtice of Eliza's remarks, though he would not liſten to what Mr. Hammond had formerly ſaid on the ſubject of Mr. Bouchier's derangement; the proofs his unhappy wife adduced were what too plainly demonſtrated it.—Scarcely could he ſo far command himſelf as not rather to increaſe than leſſen Mrs. Bouchier's fears, whoſe mind ſeemed rouſed to its higheſt pitch; ſhe would hear of no alleviation; ſhe wept not; but bore her deep

ſorrows with a ſternneſs of grief that made Mr. Kirby fear ſhe might ſuffer under a malady as dreadful as Mr. Bouchier's.

" In ſuch weather as this, when the ſnow, after laying ſo many weeks, is melting, when the roads are impaſſable, when every brook is become a river—Oh! let us haſte, ere too late! let us ſearch——"

Swift as lightning ſhe darted out of the apartment; but Kirby, by paſſing through another door, prevented her going, as ſhe intended, into the garden.

" Compoſe yourſelf; I will go in ſearch of Mr. Bouchier; all the men ſervants ſhall go."

Eliza ſuffered herſelf to be led back into the apartment ſhe had quitted, where, no ſooner was ſhe ſeated than ſhe ſunk in a deep fainting fit; when ſhe was a little recovered, Mr. Kirby ſet out upon his melancholy expedition.

Deep

Deep footſteps in the ſoftened ſnow were, by the pale light of the waning moon, diſtinguiſhable acroſs the garden towards the canal which flowed through it. Gladly the benevolent Kirby marked them on the oppoſite bank, and traced them out of the door which led into the wood; the morning now faintly dawning, the footſteeps were diſcovered in the path which led thro' the wood to the river. Scarce now had the good friend of Eliza reſolution to proceed; he made a momentary pauſe, then haſtened along, tracing the deep prints; till, at the bank of the ſtream, where a lofty rock roſe with a projecting boldneſs from it,—there the perſon, whoever it was, ſeemed to have lingered; but from there no ſtep could be traced, and whoever had ventured onward could never ſurvive to reach the oppoſite ſhore; yet Kirby hung over the rock till his heart ſickened and his head turned round. The ice was looſened, and, piled one piece on another, was borne on the boſom of the river, whoſe muddy and turbulent ſtream

was

was bearing along the trophies of its power; trees uptorn by the root were whirled round in eddies, till ſtopped by ſome projecting rock; whilſt the ſtream, as if collecting freſh force from oppoſition, roaring at its ſides, again drove all before it.

Was it poſſible, if theſe ſteps were Mr. Bouchier's, he could eſcape, had he attempted to croſs the river? Yet, perhaps, ere the ice was looſened, it was poſſible: he determined, therefore, to ſearch the oppoſite bank, and haſtily riſing, returned to the hall, and without ſeeing Mrs. B. mounted the fleeteſt horſe in the ſtables, rode with all ſpeed towards a bridge acroſs the river, and gained the bank, from oppoſite which he had every reaſon to ſuppoſe the unhappy Mr. Bouchier had precipitated himſelf.—Here, vain was the ſearch; the ſun ſhone full upon it; and, aided by the ſoft breath of the ſouth wind, had melted the ſnow, and obliterated all traces, if ſuch there might have been, of footſteps.

Here

Here Mr. Kirby pauſed, and caſt a fearful look on the projecting rock: it was poſſible, had his friend reached it ere the ice was broke, he might have croſſed the river; for on one ſide he ſaw the rock might, tho' not without hazard, be deſcended;—but this was a forlorn hope, it roſe but to deceive, for too great reaſon was there to believe the unfortunate huſband of Eliza had raſhly ventured, uncalled, into the preſence of an offended deity!

"Alas! for for pity! (ſighed out the benevolent ſurgeon) alas! misfortunes, heavy ones, no doubt, yet too keenly felt, have deprived the noble-ſouled ſtranger of his reaſon. Stupid wretch! I might have ſeen, have prevented this, had I not wilfully ſhut my eyes againſt the many proofs he gave of inſanity."

Slowly Mr. Kirby turned his horſe from the fatal banks; a few yards from this ſpot was a mill, from the owner of which he learnt that

that during the night the ice broke away, and he and his ſervants were employed in ſecuring the mill, when they were alarmed by a loud ſhriek, and a craſh of the ice, which remained adhering to the ſide of the river; and that, at day-break, a man's hat was found entangled in the wheel. Trembling with agitation, Mr. Kirby aſked to behold the hat; it was produced--no doubt remained of its having been Mr. Bouchier's; as tho' it was rent almoſt to pieces, yet the name, in his own writing, was yet diſtinguiſhable in the crown.

To find the body was all the hope that remained; to this end he gave orders to the ſervant that attended him, and returned to the hall, where he knew his preſence was neceſſary. To Eliza he deviſed a tale, which deprived her not entirely of hope, and concealed the horrid intelligence he had gained.

No ſooner did Mr. Hammond learn the diſmal tidings his friend Kirby had taken early

early care to communicate, than he ſet out for Oakdale, judging it a duty highly incumbent on him to endeavour at alleviating the troubles he, in ſome degree, had been the means of involving Eliza in. To his pious remonſtrances ſhe lent a patient ear; all meekneſs and gentleneſs, ſilently ſhe bowed under her afflictions.

The letter left for her by Mr. Bouchier, and found in Sir Philip's chamber, was ſoon after Mr. Hammond's arrival given into her hands; like that to Mr. Kirby, it was ſtrangely myſterious.

CHAPTER V.

"ADIEU, oh, Eliza! perhaps for ever!—pray thou to heaven for me! thy prayers, flowing from a heart the ſeat of virtue, may avert the deep inflictions of almighty wrath, for the ſin of ———. My ſoul ſickens as I think of thee; and wilt thou not, my Eliza, hate the wretch who has undone thee? Yet is it for thee to hate him, who —Oh! no, hate me not; and I charge thee,—yes, ſolemnly charge,—*love me not*; it is I who have brought guilt, ruin, miſery, infamy on thee, yet, thou knoweſt it not!—

Heaven

Heaven ſtill avert the ſad knowledge from thee; elſe, like me, thy brain would be whirled round in a chaos of horror—of diſtraction.

" It is I, Eliza, who drive daggers to thy gentle heart!—Yes, I, who ſhould have been thy ſhield againſt the ills of life, thy protector!—it is I, who with murderous and frantic hand blaſt the early ſpring of thy days,—that bid the new blown roſe wither in thy cheek!—But I am a wretch doomed to miſery from my cradle! What have I raſhly dared! madly, blindly, I have ruſhed on to deſtruction.—Ah! the wild impulſes of my ſoul! to what, ere this, have they urged me.—Alas! I dare not look forward! Yet, ſure deeds more horrid exiſt not in the catalogue of human iniquity! Thou wert innocent!—but now—oh! now, what art thou?——My brain maddens—reaſons flies from recollection!

Too

" Too deeply is thy image implanted in my heart—long has it dwelt there—ah! long have I desired to behold thee!—Oh! how have I beheld thee!—Horror! Blot me from thy memory, if possible, Eliza; and if that is not to be attained, if yet my image haunts thy slumbers, think of me as a stranger whom thou knew but for a season, and whom again thou shalt never behold.—Would to heaven I could efface remembrance!—but no, it is linked with thee — with despair — with guilty horror round the heart of

" FREDERICK."

The declarations of guilt this letter contained, couched in such strange and ambiguous terms, seemed to bear more the appearance of being the wild effusions of distraction,—than that Mr. Bouchier, who had given so many proofs of possessing a heart replete with every virtue, would be capable of committing crimes of a horrid tendency, such

ſuch as he accuſed himſelf of. No, it could not be; Eliza did not credit the aſſertion.

Mr. Hammond and Mr. Kirby were again bewildered in a labyrinth of conjecture; in this they agreed, that they were equally blameable in truſting the happineſs of Eliza to a man whoſe actions were tinctured with an eccentricity that bordered on, if it was not, inſanity. In vain were all the papers he left ſearched; but nothing was found that could lead towards even conjecturing who Mr. Bouchier was, where lay his property, or what were his connexions. Bills and receipts for what furniture, &c. he had purchaſed, were all the writings that could be found; and ſo careful had he been of concealment, that ſome books in which it was ſuppoſed remarks had been made that might lead to a diſcovery it was evident he wiſhed to avoid, had thoſe leaves cut out. The ſtrong cheſt mentioned in the letter to Mr. Kirby was next applied to; in this a ſum of money

money to a conſiderable amount, in bank of England bills, was found; there was wrapped round them a ſlip of paper, on which had been written by Mr. Bouchier:

"Continue, Eliza, to practiſe your uſual charity, nor curtail your expences; you have a right to ſhare my fortune; it is ample; freely uſe this; ere it is gone, by applying at the bank in Newcaſtle on the Tyne, you will find a ſum depoſited there, for your uſe as Mrs. Bouchier; and long, perhaps, before you have expended that, you will know what are my reſources, what you have a right to demand; or you will ſee me again reſtored to you and comfort—meanwhile, relax not from your ſtudies."

Hoping this might lead to a knowledge who Mr. Bouchier was, the good Kirby ſet out to make enquiries at the bank; but no ſum had there been depoſited for Mrs. Bouchier, nor did it appear her huſband was known to them. Mr. Kirby, however, flattering

flattering himſelf that he had taken ſteps that muſt eventually diſcover who paid the ſum, which he made no doubt would be placed into the Bank for Eliza, he ſet out on his return to Oakdale-hall. In paſſing thro' a conſiderable village, where he recollected an old acquaintance reſided, he ſtopped to enquire after him; his friend inſiſted upon his alighting to dine, to whom he related the cauſe of his journey, with the ſudden diſappearance of Mr. Bouchier, his ideas regarding the derangement of mind he laboured under, and his fears regarding his fate, with the pains that had been taken to aſcertain it.

"A circumſtance that has lately happened here, (ſaid the perſon Mr. Kirby was addreſſing) ſtrikes me that your fears are real; for, though the ſtream which paſſes Oakdale reaches not this village, yet the river which runs near us is joined ſome miles above by that ſtream, which you ſay, doctor, was ſwelled by the ſudden thaw, till it overflowed

flowed its banks; ſo was ours, and I think it probable the body of the unfortunate Mr. Bouchier might be borne by the torrent as far as here; and only four or five days ago a body of a perſon was taken up by ſome ſalmon fiſhers in the river. This perſon was a ſtranger here, it was ſuppoſed, and has been interred; but perhaps ſomething might remain in the pockets that would enable you to aſcertain whether it was or was not your friend."

All impatience, Mr. Kirby urged Mr. Pearſon to inform him where the people were to be found.—"I will walk with you to the ſpot, doctor."

Arrived at the houſe of the fiſhers, they made ſuch enquiries as were neceſſary; a remnant of the coat which been torn by the daſhing of the body amongſt the ice was produced, and yet retained its colour ſo freſh as to ſhow it was the ſame as Mr. Bouchier wore at the time of its diſappearing; for though he was married in black, and had

worn it for ſome months, he had lately aſſumed a different dreſs.

"Was there not a picture round the neck."

This was denied, but a chubby face boy entered, and confronted the evidence of his parents, by exclaiming, "Tom had taken the bonny laiking his mammy had given him, with the black ſtring, that belonged to the dead man."

Mr. Kirby gave the boy money, which dried up his tears, and perſuaded him, ſpite of his mother's menaces, to accompany him to Tom, who was in a boat that lay for the purpoſe of ferrying over the river, into which he was dipping, as he held it ſuſpended by a ribband, a miniature picture.

"Aye, Tom, (roared out his brother) here is ſomebody coming to ſpoil your ſport."

Mr.

Mr. Kirby caught hold of the little culprit, who, turning round, and terrified by the long hunting whip, held by the hand which had ſeized him, dropped the portrait into the river, yet Mr. Kirby had ſeen that it was that of a beautiful woman. Mr. Bouchier, his wife knew, wore ſuch a one; it was that of the lady whoſe loſs he was mourning when he came to St. Mary's; this corroborated other circumſtances, but was aſſuredly no certain proof.

Returning to the cottage, its inhabitants had quitted it,—a ſtrong proof that other valuables had been taken from the deceaſed, which they were afraid that they might be obliged to reſtore. Mr. Kirby knew, that even had Mr. Bouchier no caſh about him of conſequence when he quitted Oakdale, yet the elegant gold watch he wore was a prize thoſe people would not eaſily relinquiſh. A watch had been found upon the body, he heard from the children, and alſo learnt, that it had been ſold to an outlandiſh man,

who had a vaſt of fine things. Such a perſon Mr. Pearſon remembered ſeeing in the village a few days ago; and in hopes of retrieving what would be an almoſt certain proof, they ſet out to find him; but the pedlar, who undoubtedly was the perſon the fiſherman had ſold the watch to, they were informed was gone to a ſea port in the neighbourhood. There Mr. Kirby followed, but had the vexation to learn he ſet ſail that morning for Holland. Diſappointed, yet certainly convinced in his own mind, he returned to his friend Pearſon, with whom he left directions for a ſtone to be placed over the grave, ſignifying, that there were depoſited the remains of Frederick Bouchier.

Returned to St. Mary's Oak, he ſummoned from the hall Mr. Hammond, to whom he related the iſſue of his enquiries. Both now felt a conviction of the fate of their unhappy friend; but the knowledge they had gained of his ſad cataſtrophe, they reſolved to conceal, at preſent, from Eliza,

as

as no certain proof had been obtained it was the body of Mr. Bouchier that had been found.

In about a week after Mr. Kirby's return, Mr. Hammond quitted Oakdale, for his rectory, from which he thought he had already too long abſented himſelf.

Sadly wore away the hours of Eliza's life. Mr. Bouchier had bade her purſue ſtudies; alas! he who ſhould have directed them was no longer by her.—The charm, which had animated, which had rouſed her exertions, that had aſtoniſhed her beloved preceptor, had fled; the library, which had been ſelected with ſo much taſte, and which was ſo admirably calculated for amuſement in her ſearch after knowledge, appeared now the monument of departed happineſs.—Yet, ſhe viſited it at the hours ſhe had been accuſtomed, but not to beguile, by light reading, her ſad minutes; nor to follow in the track of acquiring knowledge, pointed

out, and moſt pleaſingly purſued, with Mr. Bouchier.—No! here the forlorn Eliza wearied heaven with prayers for his ſafety—here ſhe uſed to imagine herſelf in his preſence.—Ah! he would upbraid her for this weakneſs.—Then would ſhe take up ſome volume of inſtruction, but ſhe ſaw not the leſſons it contained; her mind ſtill fixed, deeply fixed on her huſband, whoſe reaſons for deſerting her ſhe was ignorant of—ah! why did he thus cruelly abandon her to ſorrow.—Then again, the idea of his inſanity preſenting itſelf, made her feel ſtill more anxious for his ſafety.

The grief of Eliza was not, after the firſt ſurpriſe was over, to appearance a violent one; but it was a deep rooted and never to be eradicated ſorrow ſhe felt, which in her gentle ſoul, unwilling to give pain to thoſe around her, was carefully concealed.—At Oakdale none viſited but the good ſurgeon of St. Mary's, from whoſe ſympathy Eliza alone felt comfort.

Spring,

Spring, with its early ſnows, and late bloſſoms, had yielded to ſummer, when it was viſible Mrs. Bouchier would ſhortly be a mother to a hapleſs infant, who muſt look up to her as its ſole parent. To the hope of beholding this pledge of her late happy ſtate, Eliza ſtrove to calm thoſe tranſports of grief which, when alone, ſhe often indulged in. The love ſhe had born Mr. Bouchier was ſuch as he, aided by circumſtances, was well calculated to inſpire in a heart tender and amiable. Eliza was very young, ſhe was romantic in her ideas of perfection; and, except in her huſband, ſhe had not beheld perfection. Elegant and graceful in his manners, with a face and countenance peculiarly intereſting, he poſſeſſed a liberality of ſentiment at once judicious and refined. At a moment when all earthly comfort was torn from her, when deſtitute of relatives, of home, of fortune, this accompliſhed, this faſcinating being appeared; he ſnatched her from miſery, he gave her his name, he became her inſtructor,

her friend, and then her lover,—could it be wondered Eliza worſhipped him as a creature raiſed above mortality. Strangely he appeared to her relief; heaven itſelf ſeemed to have interpoſed in her behalf; yet, ere time, or perhaps her riper judgement, had diſpelled the illuſive ideas ſhe entertained of this all-graceful deliverer, this fond, this attentive huſband, he was ſuddenly, ſtrangely, myſteriouſly withdrawn.

"Mr. Kirby, (ſaid ſhe, one day) I am perſuaded, if Mr. Bouchier lives, he is ſomewhere concealed about this houſe."

"The idea is a ſtrange one, (ſaid Mr. Kirby) what cauſed its exiſtence in your brain? Why, or for what end, (ſuppoſe there was a poſſibility of concealment, which I cannot ſuppoſe poſſible) why ſhould Mr. Bouchier conceal himſelf."

"Might not Mr. Bouchier wiſh to try my prudence; (ſhe replied) he has left me a large ſum of money in my poſſeſſion, might he not alſo wiſh to prove my attachment. You, ſir, who know his peculiar

peculiar delicacy of mind, his eccentricity of character, do you not think he might be diſſatisfied with me, whom he raiſed from a rank of life ſo much beneath his own, might he not judge me intereſted? The door of Sir Philip's room, from which he ſo oddly diſappeared, was locked you remember, in the inſide; can you account how he could eſcape? Martha talks oddly about that room; ſometimes I think ſhe believes all the fooliſh ſtories which have been handed down, through every generation, ſince the death of the good knight in that chamber; and again, I am tempted to believe ſhe knows where Mr. Bouchier is, and that ſhe was the means of concealing him in that room from our ſearch."

Such an idea as this finding exiſtence in the head of Mrs. Bouchier, made her friend tremble, leſt, like her unfortunate huſband her ſenſes were threatening to deſert her. He therefore judged it neceſſary to call her attention from ſuch vague ideas, to the true

ſtate of affairs, and made a declaration to her of all he knew regarding Mr. Bouchier, ſave that he, with his accuſtomed humanity, attributed that to accident, which, doubtleſs, was deſign; thus ſaving her from the pain of ſuppoſing her huſband was a ſelf-murderer.

At firſt ſhe appeared, as ſhe mourned the ſad fate of her beloved Mr. Bouchier, to believe with Mr. Kirby the mournful tale. Yet again, as ſhe thought of it, ſhe doubted, for no road led through the wood; why then ſhould he direct his ſteps thither? and that he had ſome certain deſtination both Mr. Kirby's letter and hers ſeemed to intimate. If this was his fate, all hope was deſtroyed; and to relinquiſh this fond, this deluſive hope, ſhe could not bear, which the ſimple Martha aſſiſted in cheriſhing.

" She could, did ſhe dare, tell ſuch tales about the hall; ſtranger things had happened in it in her time, and before her time, than

than that Mr. Bouchier ſhould vaniſh. She doubted not but he would, after this, be found; aye, nobody knew ſuch things as ſhe could tell of.—And as for Sir Philip's room, all St. Mary Oak, nay all the biſhopric, knew what had been ſeen there, though nobody could tell why, except herſelf, thoſe ſtrange ſights were ſeen."

Influenced by ſuch-like inſinuations, Mrs. Bouchier made a cloſe inſpection of the hall from the garrats to the cellars; not a cloſet was left uninſpected, yet, as well might be ſuppoſed, no diſcovery was made. Yet Martha would not give up her belief, that yet Mr. Bouchier was alive, and witneſſed every action of his wife.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the month of June Mrs. Bouchier became mother to a beautiful little girl, whom ſhe named Alicia, from that name having been borne by ſome one very dear to its unhappy father. As Eliza preſſed the helpleſs infant to her heart, ſhe fondly imagined it wore the features of a parent who might never behold it.

When Mr. Kirby found Mrs. Bouchier able to quit her chamber, and that ſhe was reſtored to much her uſual ſtrength, he informed

formed her, that ſince the birth of her infant he had viſited the bank of Newcaſtle, where no account had come from Mr. Bouchier, or any perſon, reſpecting the ſum which was to be placed there for her uſe.—That ſhe ought to reflect it was her duty to ſubmit to the inflictions of her fate, and to endeavour to preſerve her health for the ſake of her child; that no doubt could now remain of the ſad cataſtrophe, for had Mr. Bouchier lived, he would have provided for her, as he intended; it was therefore, he judged, wrong to encourage hopes of his return, which would only plunge her into difficulties. That Mr. Bouchier's property was large, ſaid he, I do not in the leaſt diſpute; yet, hitherto all attempts made for diſcovering who he was, or finding out his connexions, have proved ſo vain, that I can no longer doubt the name of Bouchier was fictitious, and merely aſſumed, to ſcreen from his friends the retreat he for a time choſe. Mr. Kirby now adviſed that all ſupernumerary ſervants ſhould be diſmiſſed that her horſes

and

and carriage ſhould be diſpoſed of, and that ſhe ſhould remove into a ſmaller houſe; the money which then would remain might, by a ſtrict œconomy, bring up her child.

No longer Mrs. Bouchier dared to ſay that yet ſhe flattered herſelf Mr. Bouchier yet lived, and acquieſced in the propoſed reduction; except, that whilſt Sir Robert Bertram would allow her to remain, and if the leaſe held good, he muſt be obliged to do ſo, ſhe would never quit Oakdale.

A ſale was made of all that was deemed ſuperfluous, and all the ſervants, except old Martha and her daughter, were diſmiſſed. The garden was let to the perſon who had it previous to Mr. Bouchier taking the hall. Eliza reſerving only the court before the houſe, and the high-raiſed terrace walk, which, by a door in the wall, communicated with the front court.—This walk had been a favorite one with Mr. Bouchier; here, oft had Eliza been ſeated by his ſide, under the

ſhade

ſhade of the venerable walnut trees, which grew at each end of the terrace, in the midſt of which their branches nearly met; round the boles of thoſe trees ſhe now was twining two woodbines, which the preceding year had been tranſplanted, by her beloved Mr. Bouchier, from a hedge where ſhe had pointed them out to him.

"Cultivation would improve them, (ſaid ſhe) I am ſure thoſe wild flowers would glow with finer colours than thoſe which are now mixing with the jeſſamine round the drawing room windows."

"We will try, Eliza," ſaid Mr. B.

The woodbines were tranſplanted, to behold what effect culture would produce, and were endeared to the gentle Mrs. Bouchier by a long train of ſweet remembrance. To have been prevented from viſiting them, or to think any ruder hand ſhould teach the tender ſhoots to claſp the tree that was to ſupport them, would have pained her in a way any perſon

perſon who has lived a leſs ſecluded life can ſcarce form an idea of; but this was not the only privilege Eliza had reſerved, ſhe had alſo the liberty of walking through the garden into the wood, which lay between it and the river. This wood had been originally laid out in well diſpoſed walks, which yet bore ſome remains of the flowering ſhrubs and plants that had bordered them, but ſince the death of the laſt of the family of Bertram, who had reſided in Oakdale hall, thoſe walks had been totally neglected; the dock and the hemlock covered the grounds with their ſpreading leaves, and filled the air with rank effluvia; the bramble and the wild briar ſtretched their tangling branches acroſs the paths, and choaked the flowers that once graced their ſides, ſave here and there, where each returning ſpring called into life a few lilies or hyacinths, whoſe tints were equalled by thoſe which reared their heads by them, planted by the hand of nature, and unaſſiſted by cultivation. Scarce a tree was ſeen in this

little

little wood, whoſe topmoſt branches did not ſhew the neſt where, ſecure from depredation, ſome mother had watched with patient care the ſooty brood, which had been rocked with every paſſing blaſt of early ſpring.

Mr. Bouchier had obtained leave to reſtore thoſe walks, and to repair the wall that incloſed them, but he was gone ere the returning ſeaſon put it in his power.

The wildneſs, the gloom of theſe ſequeſtered walks, the height, the apparent age of the moſs grown and ivy bound trees, the cawing of the rooks, the ſound of the water as it flowed over its rocky bed, all conſpired to give a penſive melancholy to thoſe, who frequented them; and to Eliza, the ideas they inſpired were in uniſon with her own ſoul; here, with her infant in her arms, would ſhe wander through each devious path, rendered ſtill more penſive by the falling of the leaves, nor till the walks were

ſo wet as to alarm Mr. Kirby for her health, did ſhe deſiſt from thoſe wanderings which became a kind of inſtinctive habit.

Ere the returning ſpring, with mild breezes, had awakened the feathered ſongſters to hail its return, or had ealled into life the pale pimroſe or ſnow-drop to peep from amongſt the ruins of the preceeding autumn, Eliza had the misfortune to loſe her pious and good friend Mr. Hammond. This gave a freſh ſhock to her ſpirits, and ſhe again abandoned herſelf to the melancholy ſecluſion ſhe had practiſed between the death of Mr. Bouchier and the birth of the little Alicia, oft paſſing the night in the apartment from whence Mr. B. had diſappeared. The health of Eliza declined, and ſhe wore the appearance of a perſon ſinking by degrees into an early grave.

Mr. Kirby was alarmed, and queſtioning Martha, learned how Mrs. Bouchier ſpent nights after nights in Sir Philip's chambers.

Mr.

Mr. Kirby intreated, for her own ſake, for that of her child, ſhe would deſiſt from a practice ſo detrimental to her health, and which ſerved but to ſtrengthen a ſorrow which he now feared would prove fatal, and which till now he was not aware exiſted in the degree he found it did; for, calm and gentle in her temper, ſhe had never, except at the firſt, given way to any violent expreſſions of that agony which was ſilently conſuming her.

Unwilling to diſtreſs her friend by refuſing, ſhe gave up to him the key of the diſmal chamber, but in doing this, ſhe did not debar herſelf from what was an indulgence, as it nurtured her ſorrow, for a key had been found by her which opened the door of the apartment called Sir Philip's; and thus did ſhe continue to ſpend a large portion of time in the gloomy chamber, the report of whoſe terrors diſmayed almoſt every individual in the pariſh of St. Mary Oak, few of whom there were who either had

had not themſelves witneſſed ſtrange ſights in this chamber, or were not acquainted with ſome one who had. Tradition corroborated living evidence, and all agreed Sir Philip's chamber was occupied by a being who was viſible or inviſible as it pleaſed. Theſe reports, which ſince the time Mrs. Mildred Bertram lived in the hall had been little ſpoke of, as this room, ſince her niece, Mrs. Menell's death, had been locked up till Mr. Bouchier took the houſe, and his having diſappeared from this room had ſtrengthened every report concerning it; but ſo various and ſo wide of the truth were theſe reports, and ſurmiſes, that I would not at preſent treſpaſs on my reader's patience by relating them, and ſhall leave them to their own conjectures concerning the connexion which the being who was ſaid to inhabit this diſmal chamber had with Mr. Bouchier, or that which was afterwards ſaid to ſubſiſt in that ſpot between his departed ſpirit and his earthly ſpouſe. Let every one, therefore, believe what they chuſe; the ſimple villagers

of

of St Mary Oak were poſſeſſed of abundance of faith; and I have already ſhewn ſome of them were not deficient in others of the cardinal virtues, which, perhaps, afford a better example than the faith which ſtrains at a gnat, yet will ſwallow a camel.

Whilſt Eliza indulged a melancholy that conſumed her health and ſtrength, and which threatened to abſorb by degrees every faculty of that mind, which under the inſtruction of Mr. Bouchier promiſed ſo much, the little Alicia, who partook not of her mothers grief, could almoſt walk alone; and had, from her firſt attempts at ſpeech, in imitating the cawing of the rook, now learned to liſp out the name of mother, who ſurveyed her infant charms with a ſad kind of mingled feeling. It was painful, yet pleaſing to careſs her, and a ſmile oft faintly played over the cheek that was wet with tears; the melancholy hours ſhe ſpent in ſecluſion never encroached on the duties of the

the mother, for Eliza was the ſole nurſe, the ſole attendant of her child.

In the autumn, after Alicia was a twelvemonth old, the worthy Martha died; and her daughter, no longer held to Oakdale by this tye, reſolved to quit a miſtreſs who had been ſo uniformly kind, that to her ſhe could not ſignify her intentions, but took an opportunity one day, when Mrs. B. was with Alicia in the wood, to acquaint Mr. Kirby.

"I'ſe boon away, ſir, from our miſtreſs, now mother's dead."

"Going away, Patty; what, my bonny laſs, haſt thou got a ſweetheart? What, thou art going to be married?"

Patty wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron.—"Sweetheart! Lord guide us, Doctor! if I ſtay at the hall I'll be wedded to my grave.—I'ſe ſure I wad not leave my miſtreſs, if I could help it; but here I will not ſtay if ſhe would give me twenty pound.

Martlemas hiring is juſt at hand, and ſhe may get a ſarvant that knows nothing about the hall, or what is ſeen in it. Why I am ſure mather told me Madam Milched could never get any body belonged to the neighbourhood to live with her; all folks hereabouts know well enough what ſort of a place Oakdale is."

Mr. Kirby, concerned that this faithful and affectionate creature ſhould quit Eliza, followed her into the houſe, to learn if ſhe had any reaſon to offer, except fears, which he thought as ridiculous as ill-founded, for he was not one of the people who, at St. Mary's, were renowned for faith; or, if you pleaſe readers, ſuperſtitious credulity.

Again poor patty had recourſe to her apron; and, after having prefaced her ſpeech, "to be ſhure and ſartain if it was ſo, he was like, who was a doctor, and the like of that, to know far betterer than ſhe, but ſhe verily believed miſtreſs was not quite right,

right, no more than her poor maſter; and ſhe was afraid it might be confectious."

The gravity of Mr Kirby's countenance was almoſt overthrown by this remark.—He, however, reſuming it, aſſured her ſhe had no cauſe to be alarmed on this ſcore, but begged to know what had cauſed her to entertain ſuch an opinion concerning Mrs. Bouchier.

The proofs ſhe adduced were ſuch as confirmed Mr. Kirby in the idea of the neceſſity of Mrs. B's quitting a ſituation where every thing conduced to nouriſh ſorrows to which he feared her conſtitution was faſt falling a prey; nor was he without doubts that her reaſon might deſert her, if ſhe continued to give herſelf up with a romantic enthuſiaſm to the indulgence of her grief; and learned, with deep concern, that ſtill ſhe oft paſſed the night without being in bed.

But

But it was not alone the fear of being infected by the malady of Mr. and Mrs. Bouchier that made Patty quit the hall; for she recounted a number of stories regarding strange appearances seen about it, to which Mr. Kirby lent an incredulous ear, but endeavoured, with his usual philanthropy, to reason away her fears, by saying how the people might have been deceived.

"Nay, nay, doctor, why you may as well persuade me I have never seen any thing since I lived in the hall; no, not in Sir Philip's chamber.—But I only wish you had seen, doctor, what I have seen there; or that you had but heard the groans and lamentations I have in that room; aye, marry doctor, but you would be like me then, glad to get away from Oakdale."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. Kirby left Patty, but ſaw it was in vain to combat ſuch deep rooted prejudices, and ſought Mrs. Bouchier, whom he found walking on the terrace; to her he propoſed a removal from Oakdale, but after various efforts he was obliged to give up the idea, as Eliza declared ſhe was unalterably determined to end her life in the hall.

Patty was, however, retained in her miſtreſſes ſervice, by the intervention of Mr. Kirby, who perſuaded her a ghoſt never appeared

appeared to two people at once; and Frank the gardener, who for ſome time had been courting her, becoming her huſband, they both remained under Mrs. Bouchier's roof, with an additional ſervant. Thoſe affairs ſettled, tranquillity was reſtored, and the hours of Eliza ſtill continued to be marked by a grief which knew no abatement; meanwhile the little Alicia improved in growth and beauty: ſhe was the darling of Mr. Kirby, who lamented deeply ſhe muſt be deprived of thoſe advantages to which her father's fortune would have entitled her. Shortly, he feared, ſhe would be left without a parent, and, except himſelf, without one friend in the world.

Mr. Kirby, with all that ſanguineneſs of temper which marked his character, had ſold his little patrimonial inheritance, to embark it in a ſcheme of colonizing land in North America. The ſplendid advantages propoſed dazzled his imagination ſo far, as to make him repreſent it to Mrs. Bouchier in

a way, which made her ſuppoſe ſhe ſhould be highly to blame if ſhe ſhould neglect ſuch an opportunity of increaſing the ſmall property upon which Alicia muſt depend; ſhe ventured it with her friend's.

A period of three years elapſed, when the ſcheme failed, and many opulent people were reduced by it to mean circumſtances. Mrs. Bouchier had but about 300l. left, and poor Kirby loſt all, for he had embarked his all in this unlucky adventure. Deeply did Mr. Kirby feel for Mrs. Bouchier, ſeverely did he, on her account, reproach himſelf; and it was ſome days after he learned the ill ſucceſs of his favourite ſcheme, ere he could ſummon reſolution to go to Oakdale, or inform Eliza of her loſs.

"Alas! (ſaid ſhe) my worthy friend, was it not for my child, this misfortune would be to me a matter totally indifferent; a heavier, a deeper grief ſits on my ſoul, and drags me, an early victim, to the tomb. But for Alicia's ſake I have no wiſh for life; God grant

grant ſhe may ſuffer leſs than I have done."

Mr. Kirby endeavoured to reaſon with Mrs. Bouchier on the impropriety of giving way to ſorrow; that, at leaſt for her child, ſhe ought to command herſelf, and aſſured her he ſaw no dangerous ſymptoms at preſent ſhe had; and hoped, would ſhe but rouſe herſelf, ſhe might be ſpared to the ſweet Alicia many years.

"No, Mr. Kirby, my days are numbered, my ſtrength gradually waſtes.—Alaſs! as yet you are ignorant of all I feel; you know not the extent of my woes! a ſecret ſorrow, a ſad, a miſterious miſery conſumes me! I want fortitude to inform you, yet, ere I die, it is neceſſary you ſhould know; but I will defer it for a time."

The ſolemn, the deep tones of the melting voice of Eliza affected Mr. Kirby greatly; in vain he endeavoured, both then and

for ſome time after, to underſtand what was the myſterious miſery to which ſhe alluded, as he ſuppoſed he was in poſſeſſion of every material circumſtance of her life.

The firſt opportunity after this converſation, Mr. Kirby again gently hinted at the apparent neceſſity there now was for Mrs. Bouchier to quit the hall, for ſome leſs expenſive place of reſidence, and ſlightly mentioned his houſe at St. Mary Oak, as large enough for two ſuch families as his and Mrs. B.

"You think me obſtinate; at preſent I muſt appear ſo; but hereafter I truſt, in ſome meaſure, I ſhall be juſtified in your opinion for declaring I will never quit Oakdale."

This Mr. Kirby made, what he reſolved ſhould be, a laſt attempt to perſuade Eliza to a removal ſhe ſeemed ſo bent againſt.

It was not long after this that the faithful and attached Patty and her huſband quitted the hall, for the province of New York, in America, where Frank had a relation ſettled in the farming buſineſs, who offered him any aſſiſtance that he required, if he would croſs the Atlantic. Againſt ſuch an offer neither Mr. Kirby nor Eliza had any thing to propoſe that could balance againſt the probable advantages; and to the mutual ſorrow of all concerned, the honeſt couple ſet out from Oakdale early in ſpring.

An entire year paſſed away, unmarked by any ſingle occurrence to vary the uniformity of Eliza's life; except, indeed, that the little Alicia, now almoſt ſix years old, began, under her mother's inſtructions, to read, and alſo to ſew; but the period ſeemed rapidly to approach that was to leave her without her beloved inſtructreſs. Eliza was ſeized with ſucceſſive faintings, which alarmed Mr. Kirby extremely; yet, from theſe fits, ſhe recovered, and fell into a quiet

ſleep that laſted ſeveral hours, and which at midnight ſhe awoke from, and with the aſſiſtance of the ſervant who was in her room aroſe, and wrapping herſelf in a looſe gown, ordered Suſan to call Mr. Kirby, who was in the next apartment, and to wake Alicia and bring her there.

"Why have you quitted your bed?" ſaid the good ſurgeon, as he entered the chamber.

"I feel much better at preſent, and it may happen I ſhall continue on earth ſome time longer; yet I think it more probable the ſun may never again be beheld by me; therefore is it neceſſary the ſecret ſhould be revealed to you, which, till the near proſpect of my deceaſe made neceſſary, I could not ſummon reſolution to do.—Oh! may the ſtep I am about to take, anſwer the end I propoſe; may my child poſſeſs more fortitude of ſoul than her ſad mother! may ſhe not ſink, as ſhe has done, under accumulated horror!"

Alicia

Alicia was brought, ſhe claſped her arms round her mothers neck, and burſt into tears.—Eliza was affected by this proof of ſenſibility:—"Oh! my child, my beloved, abandoned Alicia, thou muſt be taught to curb thoſe tender, thoſe dangerous ſuſceptibilities; thou muſt, my daughter, become as hard as the unfeeling world thou haſt to encounter."

Alicia, though ſhe liſtened, could not comprehend the import of her mother's ſpeech, but the tones of her voice ſpoke a language ſhe underſtood; and looking wiſtfully in her face, "begged ſhe would be well; that ſhe would ſtay at Oakdale, and not go to her father, and ſhe would make haſte and learn to read all the books in the library."

Eliza kiſſing her engaging child, aroſe, and leaned upon Mr. Kirby:

"Come, (ſaid ſhe) it muſt be done, would to heaven it was over."

The agitation of Eliza ſtartled Mr. Kirby. "What is it you are about to do; why my dear Mrs. Bouchier this ſolemnity of manner, this agitated look?"

"Aſk me not why; ſoon will you partake of my manner, nor will you behold what I am now about to diſcloſe without agitation. Come, you muſt ſupport me along the gallery."

"But Alicia, (ſaid Mr. Kirby) ſhe goes alſo."

"That bell has a ſolemn ſound, (ſaid Eliza, deeply ſighing) it is one o'clock."

"We hear it from St. Mary Oak, the wind muſt be North-eaſt."

They had by this time reached the door of Sir Philip's chamber, the key of which Mrs. Bouchier held.

"You ſee, Mr. Kirby, I found another way to enter here."

Mr.

Kirby ſhook his head, with a mournful expreſſion of countenance, as he turned the key.

They croſſed the room; Alicia clung, terrified, to Mr. Kirby, as deep groans were heard to iſſue from beneath their feet.—Yet ſoon ſhe recovered herſelf, and made to her mother the ſolemn promiſe ſhe then required of her, but of what nature that promiſe was, or for what cauſe Mrs. Bouchier requeſted her amiable child to mak it, I muſt beg my readers will defer inquiring, as at preſent I ſhall only inform them, that young as Alicia was, ſo deeply, ſo indelibly was the ſcene her mother judged it proper to diſcloſe to her imprinted on her mind, that the promiſe ſhe then made was never violated; ſacred did ſhe keep the ſolemn injunction; oft in the full height of childiſh ſportiveneſs would ruſh on her recollection the awful ſcene ſhe then witneſſed. In about half an hour from her entering Sir Philip's chamber, was Alicia led along the gallery, by Mr.

Kirby, and committed to Suſan's care; but he returned to Mrs. Bouchier. The door of Sir Philip's room ſecured, ſhe proceeded to inform him further regarding ſuch matters as Alicia was as yet unable to comprehend: yet not to her friend were they diſcloſed, till ſhe had laid him under an unconditional oath, taken with much ſolemnity, and with many awful accompaniments.

It was day-dawn, ere Eliza, faint and exhauſted, returned to her chamber; yet her mind was more at eaſe than it long had been, but the anxiety ſhe had ſuſtained now ſeemed, like as the cloak of Elijah, which fell with his ſpirit of prophecy on Eliſha, to ſettle on Mr. Kirby, whoſe pallid and agitated features bore evident ſigns of aſtoniſhment, if not terror. But it was generally believed at St. Mary Oak, that Mrs. Bouchier had that night conjured up the ſpirit of her huſband, to ſhew him to the doctor, with whom it was ſuppoſed ſhe held in Sir Philip's

Philip's chamber, frequent conferences.—From Mr. Kirby none could ſay they learned what paſſed, yet all the village agreed he was never like himſelf after that night, of courſe ſomething extraordinary had happened.

After the violent exertion Eliza had made, Mr. Kirby concluded ſhe would be viſibly worſe; but this did not appear to be the caſe; for, contrary to his expectations, ſhe regained her ſtrength, ſo as in a few weeks time to walk out, and reſume the ſame melancholy courſe of life ſhe had before led; except ſhe paſſed not ſo large a portion of her time in the place from whence Mr. Bouchier diſappeared; and now ſhe appeared to regret quitting a world where her daughter would be expoſed to numberleſs dangers, involved in various difficulties, without one friend to adviſe or protect, ſave Mr. Kirby, who in many ways was ill adopted for the charge which he propoſed taking upon himſelf.

Eliza,

Elzia, though during the ſummer appearing to regain her health in ſome degree; yet, as the year began to decline, alarmed the attentive care of Mr. Kirby, by a violent cough, which deprived her of her ſtrength: yet, ſtill ſhe appeared beautiful; her eyes ſeemed to have acquired freſh luſtre, and her countenance, which never could fail of intereſting, was generally ſuffuſed with a hectic glow, that rivalled the roſy bluſh of health, which, till the loſs of Mr. Bouchier, overſpread her cheeks.

Eliza was ſeated, unheeding of the damp ſo neceſſary ſhe ſhould avoid, under the ſhade of one of the ſpreading walnut trees on the terrace, in a fine evening the laſt week of September; the ſun had ſunk behind the higheſt weſtern hill, upon the ſummit of which, ſtill a trembling radiance remained.

Eliza had been reading, and the book lay by her; but her eyes were fixed upon the moon,

moon, which appeared as if riſing out of a woody hill, that ſhut in the eaſtern ſide of Oakdale valley. Alicia was employed in running up and down the graſſy ſlope of the high raiſed terrace, and playing with a dog which had been her father's; ſhe heard a carriage, and ſprung to the wall to ſee it paſs.—A high phaeton appeared, in which was ſeated a lady, and a gentleman, who held the reins; and a black ſervant followed on horſeback. Rinaldo, who had followed his miſtreſs, and was ſtanding on the wall, began to bark at the negroe, and leaped from the wall, over the horſes necks, into the road. Alarmed by the uncivil ſalutation, the horſes plunged violently, and the lady and gentleman were thrown over the wall, cloſe by the terrified Mrs. Bouchier.

The gentleman ſeemed at firſt ſtunned by the fall, but quickly roſe to aſſiſt his companion, who lay, as if dead, on the ground. The ſcreams of Alicia alarmed the gardener, who came to enquire what had cauſed them; he,

he, mounting the black ſervant's horſe, galloped to St. Mary Oak. Mr. Kirby returning with him, opened a vein in the arm of the lady, who began to revive.—She had, ere the arrival of Mr. Kirby, been conveyed into the hall, and laid upon a ſofa. It was now found her leg was dangerouſly fractured; to remove her from Oakdale was a cruelty, and far unlike every action of Mrs. Bouchier s life, who inſtantly alloted the moſt commodious apartment for her reception; thither was ſhe carried by Mr. Kirby, and her ſervant, and the fractured bones were reduced. As yet, no attention had been paid to the gentleman, who now complained of his bruiſes, and that he believed his collar bone was broke; this was found to be the caſe, but it was ſoon adjuſted, and the worthy ſurgeon aſſured his patient a ſhort time would re-unite the fracture.

Mrs. Bouchier, though her friend Kirby had forbade, now paſſed the largeſt portion of her time in Mrs. Dalrymple's chamber.

That

That lovely and amiable woman had then been married but a few weeks to Mr. D. who was a planter of the Iſland of Jamaica, but came over to England on affairs of importance. From London, where thoſe affairs had called, he went into Scotland, and at Edinburgh met with Miſs Campbell; ſtruck by her beauty, he quickly made propoſals to Miſs Campbell, who referred him to her father. Into Ayrſhire went Mr. Dalrymple, as faſt as four horſes could go, where, from Mr. Campbell, who knew ſufficient of the connexions and property of his daughter's lover, to warrant the prudence of the ſtep, he obtained a full conſent. The Weſt Indian aſked not for fortune, and the Laird of Glenmorden offered none; for gladly would he have tranſmitted the family eſtate unincumbered to his eldeſt ſon, a wiſh he ſcarce hoped it poſſible to accompliſh, as there were three ſons beſides the heir, and the ſame number of daughters, of whom this young lady was the eldeſt. Mr. Campbell, therefore, happy in ſuch a match, ordered the

the horſes to the carriage, and with his eldeſt ſon, and Miſs Jeſſe, his ſecond daughter, accompanied Mr. Dalrymple to Edinburgh.

The marriage took place immediately as the ſettlements were finiſhed, which were as liberal as if Miſs Campbell had brought him a large fortune. After a few weeks ſpent in viſiting friends and relations, in various parts of Scotland, the new married couple ſet out for London, and had quitted the great road to viſit an old ſchoolfellow of Mr. Dalrymples, at no great diſtance from Oakdale; but when they reached the houſe, it had changed its owner, Mr. Hartley having diſſipated his fortune ſo far, that in order to redeem it he had ſold his houſe, and a part of his eſtate, and purchaſing a commiſſion, had gone to join his regiment abroad. From Mr. Hartley's late abode they were driving with all ſpeed, in order to regain the London road, at ſixteen miles diſtance, when Rinaldo, ſurpriſed by the unuſual appear-

ance

ance of Mr. Dalrymple's ſervant, was the cauſe of the before related accident.

In a fortnight's time Mr. Dalrymple was able to travel, and Mr. Kirby, pronouncing Mrs. Dalrymple out of danger, it was agreed ſhe was to remain at Oakdale, being yet unable to quit her bed, much leſs undertake ſuch a journey, as Mr. Dalrymple was obliged to be in London before the ſailing of the Jamaica fleet.

Alicia had made, ere Mr. Dalrymple quitted Oakdale, a rapid progreſs in his affections; yet, ſtill more, with his lady was ſhe a favourite; and the idea of her ſoon being left an orphan ſtill further endeared her to this amiable woman, who looked on Eliza as an angel deſcended from heaven, to which ſhe was ſhortly to return. Scarcely could ſhe avoid murmuring at the decrees of providence, which had ordained ſuch ſevere trials on earth for a creature who appeared to her not to partake of the fail-

ings,

ings, the foibles, to which the wiſeſt and beſt are ſubjected.

Mrs. Dalrymple, in leſs time than her ſurgeon had hoped, was able to ſit up, and ſoon after began to recover ſtrength. Not ſo Eliza, who grew viſibly weaker; the cough which had teized her ſo long was gone, and a reſpiration ſucceeded; and, after a week of much ſuffering, the gentle Mrs. Bouchier expired, without a ſigh, as her hand was locked in Mrs. Dalrymple's; who no ſooner had recovered the firſt ſhock, than, in the preſence of Mr. Kirby, ſhe kneeled down by the bedſide, and ſolemnly vowed to act the part of a mother to the orphan Alicia.

"Heaven, (ſaid Mr. Kirby, as he raiſed Mrs. Dalrymple) will reward your charitable intentions; but the child of Eliza muſt remain at Oakdale, no relation is there to contend the guardianſhip, and you, my dear Madam, muſt allow my prior claims."

No

No more was ſaid on this ſubject till after the interment of Mrs. Bouchier, who was buried by the ſide of her grandfather, and a plain unornamented ſtone marked her grave, with this ſimple inſcription:

Here lies the unfortunate
Eliza,
Sunk by ſorrow
Into an untimely
Grave.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VIII.

THE following week Mr. Dalrymple joined his lady at the hall, and again was the care of Alicia entreated for by both; ſhe ſhould be educated as their own child—already was ſhe loved as one.

"Your offer, (replied Mr. Kirby) is generous, it is worthy of you; and I fear I ſhould be wanting in my duty to the beloved orphan was I to refuſe thoſe advantages it is not in my power to procure for her. Yet it will pain me to part with her,

and there are other reaſons which at preſent I cannot explain, why it is not proper ſhe ſhould quit Oakdale."

"Excuſe me, ſir, (ſaid Mrs. Dalrymple) when I remind you of having already explained to us the ſituation of Mrs. Bouchier's affairs. The ſmall ſum which is left for the ſweet Alicia is inſufficient to procure for her the bare neceſſaries of life; your own means you lament as limited; why then, my good friend, incumber yourſelf with a charge which will to me be ſo pleaſing; why then deprive her of advantages of education which at Oakdale, nor St. Mary's, ſhe cannot have; why not allow us to teſtify our gratitude to the departed angel, her mother?"

In ſilence the guardian of Alicia kiſſed Mrs. Dalrymple's hand, but the tear which fell from it ſpoke the conteſt in his heart, between affection and judgment.

"Have I prevailed, (ſaid Mrs. Dalrymple, with one of her ſweeteſt tones) will you yield, my dear ſir, to my entreaties?"

"Excuſe

"Excuſe me, my good friends, that I act with a degree of myſtery, and alſo inconſiſtency in this affair; but I am bound by an oath, a ſtrict, and as I ſhall hold it an inviolable oath; otherwiſe I could, by diſcloſing my reaſons, make it perhaps appear that no conſideration whatever ſhould be ſtrong enough to weigh with me, for Alicia quitting the hall. Yet, alas, ſo ſtrangely is this beloved child ſituated, that was I to diſcloſe thoſe things to which I allude, it might ruin her irreparably; but ſpend another night here, and in the morning will I declare my reſolution."

The Dalrymples agreed to this propoſal, and ſpent another night at Oakdale, where, ſince Mrs. Bouchier's death, Mr. Kirby had taken up his habitation.

That night was ſpent by Mr. Kirby wakeful and watching, for when he bid Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple good night, he paſſed along the gallery, and entering Sir Philip's chamber

ber, bolted the door, which remained ſo till almoſt the dawn of one of the ſhorteſt days. When he met at breakfaſt the little Alicia and her newly acquired friends, he, with a ſolemn air, gave her into their charge, and delegated to them that truſt he had before received from a parent.

The guardians of Alicia reſolved to ſpend that day at the hall; and at night Alicia was led weeping and trembling, by Mr. Kirby, into Sir Philip's room, where, after ſome ſtay, ſhe was conſigned to Suſan's care for the night. This ſenſible and affectionate child was greatly agitated when ſhe parted with Mr. Kirby, who ſtood with his eyes fixed on the chaiſe that held his little darling, till it was totally out of ſight; then mounting his horſe rode to North Oak, where he took proper ſteps for making a ſale at the hall of ſuch articles as remained belonging to his late friend.

The ſale was finiſhed, and the produce, with what little money Mrs. Bouchier had, made a ſum of about two hundred pounds, which, being remitted to Mr. Dalrymple, was by him placed in the funds, for the uſe of the little Alicia.

Mr. Dalrymple, who had meant, prior to his marriage, to return to Jamaica, gave up all thoughts of doing ſo, and reſided chiefly in London, where proper inſtructors attended Miſs Bouchier, in every branch of faſhionable education, whoſe quick progreſs aſtoniſhed her teachers. Alicia ſeemed as if born with a kind of intuitive knowledge; for ere an idea was well uttered, ſhe caught it, and it became her own; already the uncommon diſcernment of her character began to unfold itſelf; for early accuſtomed to reflect, and in infancy participating in the ſorrows of a beloved parent, her mind was ſtrengthened; for Alicia was, like her mother, all gentleneſs; but when led by her into the gloomy chamber, the deep, the indelible impreſſion

impreſſion, which her tender ſoul there received, ſteeled her mind, and gave her a degree of fortitude beyond what, in general, the ſex poſſeſs. Enthuſiaſtic in every feeling, the ſenſible heart of this amiable girl gave proofs of the gratitude and affection ſhe felt for her kind protectreſs, which ſeemed further to endear her.

Thus paſſed away the firſt four years of Alicia's life, after her quitting her native roof, which in that time ſhe had twice viſited, as Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple went into Scotland to viſit their relations there.

Mr. Kirby continued to think Alicia would be what her mother augured,—no common character; and that ſhe would prove herſelf worthy of the confidence which, at ſo early a period of life, had been placed in her: it was, indeed, that confidence which urged her to act as ſhe did; which made her, with all the ſportiveneſs of childhood, act at times, when ſhe was called

upon by urgent circumſtances, very unlike her age; and which gave to her thoughts a conſiſtency very rare indeed.

" Your ſoul, (ſaid Mrs. Bouchier to her daughter) is formed in no common mold; were you, my Alicia, like moſt children of your age, I would not dare expoſe to you a ſight that might drive reaſon from her infant reign; I would not truſt you with a ſecret of ſuch infinite importance! But what I this night diſcloſe to you, my Alicia, ſhall be the guardian of your future days; ſhall be the ſurety for your conduct, in every trying occurrence this night ſhall riſe to your mind."

Still the voice, the ſoft mellow voice of her ſainted mother, ſounded in the ears of Alicia. In every trial of her future life did the ſolemn ſcene float before her eyes; and to be worthy of ſuch a parent, Alicia proudly ſought how beſt to ſuſtain herſelf; how beſt to follow the maxims ſhe had been taught; how to follow with unremitted patience and fortitude,

fortitude, the path pointed out in the ſolemn interview. Even at the childiſh period of which I now treat; yes, even then, ſuch were the ſentiments of the high-minded Alicia.

Mr. Kirby ſtill lived at the hall; which ſtill was, by the inhabitants of St. Mary Oak, deemed the reſort of unquiet ſpirits; a report he no longer contradicted with that heat of argument he uſed formerly; and he, who was always an eccentric kind of character, was now ſuppoſed to be almoſt inſane. For why did he quit St. Mary Oak? who, if they were ill at night, could procure a meſſenger bold enough to go to the hall? A kind of myſtery ſeemed to hang over, and conſtrain his actions; in ſhort his reſidence at the diſmal place, (where it was known for generations back all had not been right, at leaſt in Sir Philip's chamber, as many people then alive were able to make oath what they had ſeen and heard there) was ſuppoſed to have deprived the poor

doctor of his ſenſes, as it had both Mr. and Mrs. Bouchier; if the former indeed, as it was ſaid by many, was not worſe than mad. Yet, all deplored the fate of a man whoſe connexion with the Bouchier's had been his ruin; for at Oakdale he was in a manner loſt to his friends, who all loved the chearful ſociety, eſteemed the virtues, and had, till now, only laughed at the peculiarities of Mr. Kirby.

It was not long after Alicia's ſecond viſit to her good friend at Oakdale, that a gentleman, in a hired chaiſe, attended by a ſervant, not in livery, arrived at North Oak. The gentleman was wrapped in a large drivers coat: over a wig of a very peculiar form he wore a very broad brimmed hat, flapped before; at North Oak he dined, but laid not aſide his coat or hat; nor there did any one ſee ſufficient of his face, had they ever known him, to ſay whom he was, as at dinner his own ſervant attended; therefore it was only in paſſing from the chaiſe,

and

and entering another, which was, by his ſervant's orders, drawn cloſe to the door, that he could be obſerved. At the gates of Oakdale hall the carriage was ordered to ſtop, at the inſtant Mr. Kirby was coming thro' them. He ſtarted, as the ſtranger lifted his hat, and exclaimed, "Good heavens is it poſſible, or do my eyes deceive me!"—Inſtantly both paſſed into the court, whilſt the ſervant ſtaid without diſcharging the poſt-boy, who had drove them from North Oak. This man had lived as footboy in the hall with Mr. Bouchier, and convinced, from the view he had of the perſon he brought from North Oak, that he was his late maſter, ventured to ſay ſo to the man, who was talking to him about who now lived at Oakdale,

"You had better, my honeſt lad, keep your thoughts to yourſelf, (ſaid the very conſequential perſon he was addreſſing) if it is Mr. Bouchier, you will ſoon learn."

"Ah! God bleſs his honour, he was the beſt maſter ever poor lad ſerved; we all thought he had been drowned, but now he is alive I think I will not long drive from the Duke's Head, would you but be kind enough, ſir, to ſpeak for me to his honor."

"Yes, yes, depend on me, his honour ſhall know," ſaid the important attendant, as he alſo paſſed into the court gates; and, without any ceremony but a ſort of malicious grin, ſlapped them in the poor fellow's face, who was yet ſtanding, cap in hand, to his honor's gentleman.

"I don't much like thee, however, (ſaid he) as he mounted his horſes) I am ſure maſter liked no ſuch ſaucy proud fellow, but mayhap he is changed."

The news of Mr. Bouchier's return was not concealed; for, ſtopping at the Croſs Keys in St. Mary's Oak, through which he had to paſs, he divulged the news, with the addition of Mr. Kirby having ſhook hands with his old friend, and welcomed him back.

The

The bells were rung, or, more properly ſpeaking, jingled at St. Mary's on this occaſion, and various conjectures were hazarded, what had cauſed Mr. Bouchier to abſent himſelf ſo long.

What paſſed at Oakdale during thoſe demonſtrations of joy, I am not at preſent inclined to relate; but in the duſk a chaiſe and four horſes were obſerved to be waiting at the terrace wall, and the ſame carriage drove furiouſly through St. Mary's. In it, afterwards it was ſuppoſed, Mr. Kirby's gueſt had taken his departure, but it was mere ſuppoſition, for no creature could ſay they had ſeen any perſon in the chaiſe.

The following morning Mr. Kirby mounted his horſe, which he ſent back from Durham with a meſſage, importing he ſhould not be at home for a few days. A fortnight however paſſed away, ere he returned to make his appearance to the impatients of St. Mary's.

"What took you away in ſuch a hurry, doctor," enquired Mrs. Ellerly.

"The Devil, madam," replied Kirby, with a low bow, and a grave ſarcaſtic air.

"Lord forgive you, doctor, you talk wickeder than ever."

"Pray, ſir, (ſaid Mr. Jackſon) is not, jeſting aſide, Mr. Bouchier returned to Oakdale, though you have long declared he was dead."

Mr. Kirby changed colour, as he haſtily enquired of his friend what had cauſed ſuch a report.

"Why aſk that, doctor, (interrupted Mrs. Ellerly) you know you ſhook hands with him, and ſaid you were glad to ſee him look ſo well, and welcomed him back to Oakdale."

Kirby held up his hands in amazement. "Who ſhould tell all this ſtuff," he cried, and then, with an oath of a ſize that made the good old lady hold up her hands alſo, declared it was a lie.

Mr.

Mr. Jackſon, however, explained what the report had aroſe from, by recounting what the poſt boy from North Oak had declared at the Croſs Keys.

" Have you no other foundation, then, for this ſtory? Tom is a lying raſcal, I only ſaid, was it poſſible, or did not my eyes deceive me, or ſome ſuch thing."

" Well, if you did then, doctor, (ſaid Mr. Jackſon) make ſome ſpeech of the kind, it ſurely corroborated what the ſervant ſaid to Thomas, who ſaid he was certain the perſon ſo oddly muffled up was Mr. Bouchier; and you know he lived at the hall all the time Mr. B. was in it; and I muſt ſay, Kirby, you have put yourſelf into a paſſion, when no offence was, or could be intended."

Some apologies Mr. Kirby found himſelf obliged to make; which done, he ſaid " that he granted he was alarmed by ſo unexpected a ſight, and entirely off his guard, but they might believe him it was not Mr. Bouchier, really alive."

" Mercy upon us, Doctor, what was it then, his ghoſt, in open day-light?" ſaid Mrs. Ellerly.

Again the Doctor flew out, and again ſwore a pretty round oath, by which he aſſigned all refractory ghoſts, and all believers in ſuch, to eternal perdition, and concluded his ſpeech, ſaying, " have I not told you, years ago, I believed no ſuch folly and nonſenſe; I think every body is going mad."

Mr. Jackſon was grieved to hear his friend talk in a way which to him appeared wild, flighty, and incoherent; and would have changed the ſubject, but Miſs Ellerly, whoſe curioſity was equal to her mother's, was determined not to ſuffer the Doctor to get off ſo.

" Pray ſir, (ſaid ſhe, in an affected tone of voice) pray, if not the real, identical Mr. Bouchier, nor yet his ſpirit, what could

it be, that followed you into the court."—Here ſhe ſmiled at her own wit.

"Ay, what could it be?" gravely echoed her ſage mama.

"Why, what could it?" retorted Mr. Kirby, with a look and manner that momentarily impoſed a dead pauſe in the converſation.

The ſilence was, however, broke by Mr. Jackſon:—"You hear ladies, it was not Mr. Bouchier, then of what importance is any further enquiry; the ſtranger was, I ſuppoſe, a friend of Mr. Kirby's, and moſt probable not known to us."

"No, by the Lord Harry, no friend of mine; and I would ſooner meet all the ghoſts that have haunted Oakdale ſince Sir Philip's time, than ſtand a chance of encountering ſuch another devil."

"What then, (ſaid Miſs Ellerly, again venturing to ſpeak) what, Doctor, was it is his infernal highneſs himſelf that honoured you with a viſit."

"You

"You have gueſſed it, you have got right at laſt; for, (lowering his voice) I believe, (ſaid Kirby) it was the very devil himſelf."

The ladies changed colour; Mr. Jackſon laughed at what he deemed a jeſt upon the very impertinent queſtions that had been aſked; and an involuntary exclamation of terror was made by the female ſervant, who was bringing in tea. She, therefore, at her return into the kitchen, did not fail to enlarge upon a topic ſo capable of receiving a little embelliſhment at her hand.

The poſtillion, who had not thought before of either horns or hoofs, when he ſo poſitively aſſerted it was his quondam maſter, now declared there was ſomething very particular about the ſtrangers feet, as he ſtepped out of the chaiſe, but could not poſitively aſſert they were cloven; and he was certain of this, when he ſtopped at the turnpike gate to let out ſome paſſengers he had taken up

up on the road, there was a ſtrong ſmell of brimſtone. That night too, was a high wind; it unroofed a part of the church, and had thrown down the chimney belonging to Oakdale hall. The chaiſe that was ſeen waiting by the terrace wall, with its four horſes and driver, were now ſaid to be all black; nay, one of the old women of St. Mary's, who had lived in the hall in Madam Mildred Bertram's time, and whoſe ſtories knew no end about the ſtrange things ſhe had ſeen there, was told by a pedlar, who had it from the man's wife's ſiſter's ſon, who ſaw the very chaiſe in which, as it was black, there could be no miſtake, juſt beyond Darlington a little way, leap acroſs the hedge from the road; and that this very man's wife's ſiſter's ſon told the pedlar, that this relation of his, who was going to his work, followed it till it diſappeared in a flaſh of fire, juſt as it reached the deep pit called Hell-kettle.

Indeed,

Indeed ſo very various were the reports propagated, that, I am inclined to believe, ſome wags, taking advantage of the credulity of the ſimple villagers, amuſed themſelves a conſiderable portion of the winter following this myſterious viſit to Mr. Kirby, in inventing ſtories which, however marvellous, were ſwallowed. What, indeed, I ſuppoſe made thoſe tales, extravagant as they were, gain credit, was, that ſome people of the moſt conſideration at St. Oak queſtioned the ſervants of Mr. Kirby, who both declared they had ſeen no one enter the hall that day, or, indeed, any one depart; but that they remarked that night, and the next morning, previous to his ſetting out upon his journey, their maſter appeared engroſſed by ſome weighty affair.

From this period Mr. Kirby was ſhunned by the idle, vulgar minded, of which claſs moſt of the neighbourhood of Oakdale was compoſed; and the ſtrange, myſterious kind of anſwer he had given, regarding his viſitor,

viſitor, made his beſt friends ſuppoſe him not quite ſound, either in his heart or judgment, although they did not, like the former, ſuppoſe he had dealings with the Devil.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT this period Mr. Dalrymple received ſuch unfavourable accounts from Jamaica, as determined him to viſit his poſſeſſions there. Mrs. Dalrymple reſolved to accompany her huſband; but it was agreed Alicia ſhould be left at ſchool, in the vicinity of London; and Edgecome houſe, in the neighbourhood of Clapham, was fixed upon. Mrs. Dalrymple accompanied her there.

" Alicia,

"Alicia, (ſaid ſhe, during their drive) particular reaſons there are which renders concealment neceſſary for you; what thoſe reaſons are, you ſhall learn hereafter; it is therefore requiſite you ſhould change your name for that of Sleigh. Of your diſcretion I am convinced, but I think you yet too young to be entruſted with a ſecret of ſuch importance; my friends and acquaintance are informed you are to be returned to your own family. One gentleman, a particular friend of Mr. Dalrymple, is intruſted with you, but he knows you by the name of Sleigh, and no other; by that name will I write you, my ſweet girl, under cover to this gentleman, and your letters to me muſt be ſent under cover to him: by this plan alſo a correſpondence may be kept up with Mr. Kirby, only addreſſing him as Mr. Kirby, by which name I will ſpeak of him to Mr. Meyrell."

Alicia was loſt in amazement, and for ſome time ſhe ſcarce could comprehend what

Mrs.

Mrs. Dalrymple ſaid to her, on a topic to which it was requiſite ſhe ſhould attend.—Arrived at the place of their deſtination, Mrs. Dalrymple introduced Alicia, as Miſs Sleigh, to Mrs. Selden. Sadly did ſhe feel when ſeparated from her ſecond mother, who was to ſet out the following day for Falmouth, where they were to embark in the packet. Forcibly did this ſeparation recall the loſs ſhe had ſuſtained in her beloved parent. Recovering, by the kind attentions of Mrs. Selden, from her ſorrow, ſhe applied herſelf to the various branches of education ſhe was taught; yet, ſpite of her fortitude, her thoughts oft turned upon this change of name, and ſhe wearied herſelf in conjectures concerning it. Oh! why could ſhe not, when ſeparated from her beloved Mrs. Dalrymple, impart to her what ſhe had ſeen, ere her mother's death, at Oakdale.—Ah! why the ſolemn injunction, the awful reſtraint laid upon her.—Mrs. Dalrymple, not knowing her exact ſituation, might have made her change her name,

name, perhaps needleſsly. To Mr. Kirby ſhe reſolved to write, whenever ſhe could find an opportunity of doing ſo, without her letter being inſpected, to enquire of him concerning this arbitrarily impoſed name: this did not, however, happen till the next vacation, at which time ſhe committed the following epiſtle to the care of one of the young ladies, to put into the poſt-office.

ALICIA TO MR. KIRBY.

" Your laſt epiſtle gave me, my dear ſir, ſincere pleaſure; it told me you were in health; ah! why did I ever quit you—by ſo doing others have acquired a right over me, which belongs alone to yourſelf.—Ah! why is Oakdale ſo far diſtant!—ah! that now your poor Alicia was by you; ſhe who is now deſerted by all, then would look up with ſecurity to him, who was, and is almoſt the only friend ſhe has in the world. Alas! my ſecond mother, my beloved Mrs. Dalrymple, is not now by me, to aid, to counſel,

ſel, to reſtrain, my childiſh impatience!—Yes, ſhe is far, far diſtant! the wide ocean rolls between us!

"Oh! how oft do I fancy myſelf by you, in that wood where you, laſt time I viſited the hall, ſhewed me the rock from whence it was imagined my father had fallen, and found a watery grave.—On that ſubject I would further, if permitted, queſtion, and much, much would I ſay: but, alas! you may deem me diſobedient; you may tell me I infringe upon the ſolemn injunction of my beloved mother. I dare not, at this diſtance, hazard thoſe queſtions; yet, muſt I aſk, why did Mrs. Dalrymple impoſe on me a name, which, till the day I came to Edgecombe-houſe, was a ſtranger to my ears? I have been accuſtomed to think, to reflect; nor is it vanity which urges me to ſay, my dear ſir, your Alicia is not like other children of her age. If my mother judged me, at eight years of age, capable of bearing what then ſhe judged proper to diſcloſe, ſure now I can

bear to hear, at leaſt, the cauſe of the change of my name."

This was nearly the ſum of Alicia's epiſtle, which, by the means ſhe pointed out, Mr. Kirby ſpeedily anſwered.

" You tell me, (he ſaid) Alicia you are not like other girls of your age, prove yourſelf ſo—prove yourſelf worthy of the confidence a dying parent repoſed in you. You ought Alicia to be different from other girls; what child, at ſo early an age, had an object placed before them to which they were to attain; and though at eight years old you appeared endued with qualities which authoriſed your mother's judgment in diſcloſing to you what almoſt every child but yourſelf would have ſhrunk from, yet there muſt ſeveral years elapſe, ere your reaſon will be matured ſufficiently to bear what remains to be unfolded.

" Does not now, my Alicia, the ſolemn ſcene riſe to your mind? recall you not the converſation

converſation which paſſed when you were laſt at Oakdale, in Sir Philip's chamber?—Remembering that, you will alſo remember all enquires on the ſubject you allude to are alike improper for you to make, and for me to anſwer. Reſume yourſelf then, my beloved child; be once again the ſame uncommon character you were known when almoſt an infant; when you were, Alicia, ſolemnly, by your mother, committed to the charge of him ſhe ſtyled her only earthly friend."

This epiſtle produced the effect Mr. Kirby propoſed by it; and Alicia, who had fretted herſelf ſick with impatience, felt at once rouſed to exertion, and purſued, as Miſs Sleigh, her education with the ſame unremitting ardour ſhe had as Alicia Bouchier.

Meanwhile, her friends had arrived at Jamaica, and Mr. Dalrymple had the mortification to find all was in a ſtate much worſe than he had reaſon to expect. The overſeers,

overſeers, behaving careleſsly, and in many inſtances cruelly, to the ſlaves on the eſtates, had cauſed deſertion; and the fear of returning to be puniſhed, as ſome were who fell into the hands of thoſe Mr. Dalrymple had incautiouſly intruſted the power with, made many of the ſtrongeſt and moſt valuable of his negroes take ſhelter in woods, amidſt almoſt inacceſſible mountains; thoſe who were left, inſufficient for the labour enjoined, moſtly ſickened. This was the ſituation of the late ſo flouriſhing eſtates of Mr. Dalrymple, at his arrival upon them; the wretches who had cauſed the ruin fled, whilſt every day reſtored to their owner ſome ſlave, who now gladly returned to his maſter, as their late overſeers were gone.—Mr. Dalrymple, however, found it would be neceſſary he ſhould ſtay ſometime in the country, ere his property would be of the ſame value it was previous to his marriage. Mrs. Dalrymple failed not to write frequently to Alicia, and informed her it would

be ſome time ere ſhe ſhould return to England.

Three years had Alicia ſpent at Edgecumbe houſe, where ſhe ſtaid through each vacation, unnoticed by any of Mrs. Dalrymple's friends, who all were alike ignorant where ſhe was, when ſhe was one day ſummoned to the parlour, where ſhe found Mr. Meyrell, the gentleman to whoſe guardianſhip ſhe was left by Mr. Dalrymple, ſeated with Mrs. Selden, by whom ſhe was informed Mr. Meynell had ſolicited permiſſion for his ward ſpending a few days with him.

Alicia's heart bounded at the thoughts of liberty, and quickly was ſhe ready to attend her guardian, whoſe carriage ſtood ready at the gate to receive them.

Mr. Meynell had twice or thrice viſited Edgecumbe houſe on Miſs Sleigh's account, but theſe viſits were ſhort, and he was almoſt an entire ſtranger to her. He viewed her

her with attention, nor was Alicia diſconcerted by it, for ſhe thought not of it; her mind was at that time occupied by the idea ſhe ſhould ſpend a few days, free from the unchanging uniformity of ſchool. She was recalled, by Mr. Meynell's informing her one of her beſt friends was at his houſe waiting to behold——

"Ah! (ſaid Alicia) I have ſo few friends, it muſt be, it can be only Mr. Kirby!"

"It is Mr. Kirby who I find is going abroad, and wiſhed to ſee you ere he goes."

Soon was Alicia embraced by the worthy friend of her infant days.

"He informed her a relation of his had died in America, and in conſequence of this he ſucceeded to conſiderable property in that country, which obliged him to croſs the Atlantic."

"Miſerable child that I am, (exclaimed Alicia) thus are all my friends torn from me!

thus am I left abandoned—deſolate—alone, as it were, in the world!"

Mr. Kirby, though he attempted conſoling his beloved Alicia, yet appeared equally to need conſolation.—For her ſake it was evident he took ſo long a voyage, encountered a journey replete with fatigue, if not danger.

"At my return Alicia, (ſaid he) you will be independant; in two years, moſt probably, I ſhall again, my dear child, ſee you."

After ſpending the greateſt ſhare of three days with Alicia, to part with whom was a taſk he found himſelf ſo far unequal to, that he bade her adieu in a letter, which he gave into the hands of his kind hoſt, Mr. Meynell, when he quitted him. In this was ſhe counſelled by her early friend to be patient, to be prudent.

"As yet, Alicia, (he ſaid) you are not ſufficiently aware how needful it is you ſhould cultivate

cultivate thoſe virtues; for yet you know not how you may be beſet by danger—how ſtrangely you are circumſtanced; neither muſt you, my child, ſuffer your mind to dwell upon your misfortunes, nor allow the myſterious ſcene beheld by you at Oakdale too deeply to oppreſs your ſpirits; as ſuch it was not meant.—No, Alicia, it muſt ſpur you on to exertion; it is the idea of it which muſt animate you to bear, with a fortitude worthy of you, what yet remains for you to learn.—I need not ſay be ſecret—I will not, I do not ſuppoſe it poſſible you can ever infringe on the ſilence enjoined; nor let any conſideration prevent, at the appointed time, executing the injunction of your parent, which in due time will be fully diſcloſed."

Within this letter was incloſed another, alſo addreſſed to her, on the cover of which was wrote—" open not this, Alicia, till you are ſixteen, if before that I am not returned."

"Alas! (exclaimed ſhe) how, how at that period ſhall the poor Alicia ſuſtain herſelf, and you abſent?"

For ſome time was ſhe deprived of that fortitude ſhe felt convinced it was her duty to aſſume. Recovering herſelf, the amiable girl wiped the tears that dimmed her eyes, and ſought Mr. Meynell.

"I am come, (ſaid ſhe) ſir, to thank you for the indulgence ſo kindly beſtowed on me by you. The period is come, when I muſt return to ſchool, where I ſhall do all in my power to finiſh thoſe improvements my friends Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple put in my power to attain; nor ſhall my regret at parting with this dear friend retard them."

"I ſee, my dear girl, your merit in ſuppreſſing your feelings; and though I cannot hope to rival Mr. Kirby in your regard, I ſhall endeavour to make up by my future attention, the loſs you have ſuſtained in him."

"Will

"Will you then, ſir, allow the poor forſaken Alicia to look up to you as a friend, in England the only one ſhe knows?—Allow her then thus, (and ſhe fell at his feet) to transfer to you her duty, will you condeſcend to accept it?"

Mr. Meynell, raiſing, promiſed the gentle Alicia to conſider, in future, as his child:—"Confide in me, (he ſaid) as far as your ſituation admits. I know you are peculiarly circumſtanced; I know there are ſome myſteries regarding you; but theſe I wiſh not to penetrate; nor would I liſten to you on the ſubject of your birth or connexions, which were aſſiduouſly concealed by my friend Dalrymple, who barely informed me you were an orphan of the Iſland of Jamaica; nor from Mr. Kirby had I other information. Your letters to him were directed to be left at the York poſt-office, till called for; and the ſame myſtery hangs over him as you."

"Ah! would to heaven, my dear ſir, I could divulge to you ſuch parts of my ſtory as already I am acquainted with; but a

ſacred promiſe, made to my mother—renewed to Mr. Kirby, forbids this; forbids even to ſpeak of the feelings which have, which do agitate me."

"Gladly, my dear Alicia, would I ſhare your ſolitary woes; gladly, if in my power, relieve them; but I am not allowed this; you are doomed, I find, to a ſilence which forbids the aſſiſtance I might happily afford; where I can be of ſervice, reſt aſſured I want but to learn how. I am ſorry I ſo long have neglected you; the uniformity of ſchool has, I fear, contributed to depreſs your ſpirits; but hereafter conſider this houſe a home, the enſuing vacation muſt be ſpent here."

With ſuch aſſurances of future protection and friendſhip, did Mr. Meynell chear the drooping orphan, till the chariot was at the door to convey her back to ſchool, whither he was her eſcort.

Settled again at Mrs. Selden's, Alicia had leiſure to reflect on her ſituation. She felt, indeed,

indeed, deſerted, left without a ſingle perſon intereſted for her. This idea vaniſhed, as her late converſation with Mr. Meynell preſented itſelf; and ſhe was thankful to that providence, who had raiſed up ſuch a friend and protector, when ſhe was ſo widely ſeparated from the only people who loved her.—Her mother ſhe recollected having ſaid God would raiſe up freſh friends to her, in lieu of thoſe he thought fit to remove; and ſhe felt a pleaſing conſolation in the remembrance that hitherto her mother's words had been prophetic.

"Ah! (ſighed ſhe) that beloved parent bade me look forward with hope; ſo did Mr. Kirby; they bade me ſuſtain myſelf with fortitude.—Alas! I fear I have been very diſobedient, but I will rouſe thoſe faculties implanted in me; it behoves me to exert myſelf more than other girls."

Many and various were the conjectures formed by Alicia regarding the myſtery

which pervaded all that concerned her; yet, various as they were, none aſcertained the truth. Her temper, naturally frank and open, ſpurned at the idea of concealment; and her ſoul, the ſeat of every virtue, was ſhocked at an idea, which oft intruded, that ſome terrible crime was the cauſe of her preſent change of name, and the ſecrecy obſerved, regarding her.—Treaſon and murder ſtalked in horrid forms through her brain; of theſe her mother,—yes—her beloved mother—was—muſt be innocent.—But her father—that way lay ſuſpicion—ſtrengthened, if not originating, with what ſhe had ſeen in Oakdale hall.

It was ſome days before Alicia, who, tho' yet a child in years, poſſeſſed more fortitude and nobleneſs of mind than moſt women; or, indeed, of men either, could recall her ideas to the methodical arrangement of inſtruction which ſhe went through at that period with much the ſame benefit any automaton would have received.—But from this

this wandering of ideas, and abſence to all around her, was ſhe recalled by the contempt, the inſult, to which ſhe found herſelf expoſed from ſome of her ſchoolfellows. If they walked, all avoided being her companion; and in the hours allotted for relaxation ſhe appeared an intruder, of whoſe preſence they were weary; forming into groups, ſhe could diſtinguiſh the titter of malice, and in the half whiſper was her name, with ſarcaſtic tones, repeated.

Diſtreſſed, and conſcious it was undeſerved, although unacquainted what had wrought ſuch a change in the behaviour of her companions, Alicia recalled all the leſſons of patience, of fortitude ſhe had been taught, and reſolved not to mention to Mrs. Selden, or the governeſſes, the indignities at which her high and upright ſpirit revolted. Her quick and lively imagination diſplayed itſelf in ſo many various ſhapes in thoſe hours allotted for play, that in deſpite of the inſinuations and miſrepreſentations of ſome of

the elder girls, Alicia's ſuperiority was too ſtriking to be overlooked; and ere ſhe was aware of its forming, ſhe found herſelf at the head of a party compoſed chiefly of the youngeſt and ſecond claſſes of girls; who, though taught to laugh at, and ridicule Alicia, had not been intruſted with the grand ſecret, which was kept amongſt the chief of her enemies, as carefully guarded, and with as many ſigns and ſymbols attached as that of maſonry itſelf.

"I know, (would ſome of Alicia's little friends ſay) Oh! I know the tall ladies diſlike Miſs Sleigh, becauſe ſhe is ſo handſome. Yes, (would another ſay) and becauſe they envy her the praiſe of Mrs. Selden, and all the teachers and maſters:—what lady in the ſchool learns every thing ſo quick as Miſs Sleigh? Becauſe thoſe ſad ill-natured miſſes find their taſks a trouble, they diſlike her, who finds them none; and I am ſure ſhe often aſſiſts thoſe who treat her the worſt."

CHAPTER X.

THUS ſtood affairs at the commencement of the firſt holidays after Mr. Kirby left England; and Alicia ſometimes feared Mr. Meynel might forget the promiſe he had made of bringing her to his houſe at the holidays.

Alicia had heard ſome of her enemies, as they talked of the approaching joyful ſeaſon, ſay Miſs Sleigh would be left to keep the beds aired againſt they returned to ſchool. Many of her little friends had begged ſhe would

would accompany them home, "it was ſo very, very hard ſhe ſhould always be left at ſchool; her friends were very croſs, they thought; but my papa or my mama, if I only ſay to them how I love you, will beg of Mrs. Selden, and you ſhall go with me."

All invitations, had they even been given by the parents of her young admirers, Alicia muſt have refuſed; therefore aſſured them ſhe was extremely happy at ſchool, which ſhe could not quit without permiſſion from her guardian.

The ſecond carriage which drove up to Mrs. Selden's door, the day the ſchool gave up, was an elegant coach with four bays, the ſervants belonging to which were in ſplendid liveries.

"Ah! who does that beautiful equipage come for?" ſaid one of the miſſes.

"For

"For Miſs Sleigh, moſt probably," replied, with a ſarcaſtic and pointed emphaſis, Miſs Aiſlabie, who was at the head of the combination againſt the peace of Alicia, who remained at the window with a countenance perfectly unmoved by the reply of Miſs Aiſlabie, or the malicious titter which ran through her confederates.

Mr. Meynell Alicia ſaw alight from the coach ſo much admired, and hand out an elegant looking woman about forty, and a lovely girl that appeared near her own age; yet did ſhe check the triumph ſhe felt at finding Mr. Meynell had not forgot her, as he bowed in paſſing from the carriage.

"Who is it? (cried ſome of the miſſes) Oh! what a charming woman! (ſaid another) What a beautiful girl!" (ſaid a third). Yet Alicia ſpoke not, though another remarked, "the gentleman had bowed to ſome one at the window."

"Oh!

"Oh! doubtleſs to Miſs Sleigh! I cannot imagine any young lady in the ſchool but ſhe will have ſuch a carriage ſent for them."

The next vehicle that drove to the gate was, oh! ſhocking to relate, that it ſhould ever have diſgraced ſo polite a ſeminary by ſo doing, was a hackney coach. It was therefore concluded, that no inhabitant of that houſe could it be ſent for, unleſs one of the half-boarders. One of the governeſſes entered; all but Alicia crowded around her to enquire if ſhe knew who that elegant equipage belonged to, or which of them it had come to take home.

"For none of you ladies, (ſhe replied) but the coach which now ſtands at the gate, waits Miſs Aiſlabie for you; as your aunt is out of town, ſhe left orders with her houſe-keeper to come for you, leſt you might wonder at the delay. Miſs Sleigh, (Alicia advanced) come my dear, the carriage you have been admiring is come for you; Mr. Meynell,

Meynell, with Lady and Miſs Bertram, are now in the parlour with Mrs. Selden, and are impatient to ſee you."

Alicia now, with a dignity of manner which ſeemed inherent in her, and a grace which at all times marked the moſt trifling of her actions, thanked Miſs Farrer for the trouble ſhe had taken. Then turning to the miſſes, on whoſe countenances ſhame and mortification were ſtrongly painted, ſhe ſaid, "You are, Miſs Aiſlabie, quite a propheteſs, for you declared that coach contained my friends before the ſervant opened the door."

Miſs Aiſlabie flounced away, but the others returned the adieus of Alicia with diſtant curtſies.

"This, my dear ward, (ſaid Mr. Meynel, as he took her hand on entering the parlour) is Lady Bertram."

The

The name, which Miſs Farrer mentioned before, was then ſcarce heard; but it now ſtruck her with an electric force. Was ſhe of the Oakdale family? was the queſtion the heart of Alicia inſtantly aſked. Recovering herſelf, ſhe paid her compliments to Lady Bertram, who introduced her to Miſs Bertram.

"At the deſire of Mr. Meynel, I have brought my daughter, (ſaid her Ladyſhip) to entreat for her your friendſhip; you are of nearly the ſame age, and the account I have received from Mrs. Selden ſo fully confirms the character Mr. Meynell has given of you, my dear girl, that the advances I now make to you are with the hope of ſecuring ſuch a friend to Mary, as will guard the good qualities ſhe now poſſeſſes."

"Refuſe me not (ſaid Miſs Bertram) your heart and confidence," as ſhe took Alicia's hand.

"I ſhall (ſhe replied) feel honoured, and grateful, for Miſs Bertram's confidence; and

and the poor Alicia, as yet is a ſtranger to the happineſs of loving, and being loved, by a friend of her own age. Her heart, or ſhe ſtrangely miſtakes, ſhall be devoted to you for life."

Mrs. Selden, who had been abſent when Alicia entered, now returned. To her Alicia paid her acknowledgments for the favourable opinion ſhe had ſo kindly expreſſed, and which had contributed to Lady Bertram's deciſion reſpecting her.

"Had I, Miſs Sleigh, (ſaid Mrs. Selden) ſuppoſed you capable of being rendered vain by praiſe, you would have been unworthy of what I have ſaid; but praiſe will but ſtimulate you to freſh exertions, and it is, perhaps, the higheſt encomium I can beſtow, when I ſay you are almoſt the only girl I know who is capable of bearing it."

Mr. Meynell, leading Alicia and the beautiful Mary Bertram, was paſſing to the carriage,

carriage, whilſt her ladyſhip lingered with Mrs. Selden.

"I have marked (ſaid the latter) a greatneſs of mind, and noble fortitude of character in Miſs Sleigh, which argues a moſt exalted ſoul, and an underſtanding far beyond her years; ſo much ſo, that I might deem it almoſt ſupernatural, did I not ſuppoſe it cauſed by ſome ſingular circumſtances of her ſhort life; ſome myſtery hangs over her I am certain, though I am perfectly ignorant what."

"I underſtand, (ſaid her ladyſhip) ſhe is an orphan of Weſt India parentage."

"So, my lady, I have been informed; but on this ſubject ſhe has maintained a reſerve that I am conſcious has thrown her into ſome unpleaſant ſituations."

Lady Bertram had now reached the carriage, into which ſhe ſtepped, bidding Mrs. Selden good morning.

Mr.

Mr. Meynell had, in croſſing to the coach, informed Alicia they were going ſtrait to Acornbank, a ſeat of Sir Robert Bertram, in Hertfordſhire.—" I thought you, my dear ward, would neither receive pleaſure or improvement beneath my roof, whilſt both awaits you at Acornbank."

Alicia bowed, but ſpoke not; ſcarce could ſhe ſupport herſelf, as Mr. Meynell aſſiſted her into Sir Robert Bertram's coach, whoſe name had chaſed the colour from her cheeks; for ſure, thought ſhe, it muſt be the Baronet of Oakdale, yet dared ſhe not aſk a queſtion which might thus betray her; nor, in the kind of hurry which being ſeated cauſed, was her agitation remarked; and recovering herſelf, Alicia chaſed, as far as her ſituation would permit, the idea of Oakdale hall, an idea that would willingly have abſorbed all within itſelf, and rouſed to animation, by the remembrnnce of Mr. Meynell's kindneſs, exerted herſelf to pleaſe, where ſhe had been ſo partially praiſed.

They

They reached Acornbank, after a pleaſant drive, againſt the hour of dinner. The houſe was not very large, but every way calculated for comfort, more than that grandeur, which the large fortune of its owner might have tempted him here to diſplay. The ſituation was beautifully choſen,—few indeed in the charming county in which it was could exceed it; the pleaſure grounds were laid out with much neatneſs, and pictureſque variety, yet, as well as the houſe, not upon a large ſcale. Such was the retreat to which Alicia was welcomed by Miſs Bertram's embrace, accompanied by the hope ſhe expreſſed of ſpending many happy days there with her new friend. Lady Bertram too, kindly ſaluted and welcomed her gueſt.

To the vexation and diſappointment of Miſs Bertram, it was nearly dark ere they had reached Acornbank; for ſhe propoſed great pleaſure in ſhewing Alicia the grounds, the obſervatory, the green-houſe, and aviary.

Lady

Lady Bertram had allowed her to promiſe all theſe ſhould be ſeen by her friend that day.

" You ſhould, Mary, have wings, (ſaid her mother) you are ſo rapid; look, my dear, the ſun is already ſet; tomorrow you ſhall drive round the pleaſure grounds, another day you may walk to the aviary and green-houſe. Miſs Sleigh cannot, at ſchool, be accuſtomed to half the degree of exerciſe you are."

" O dear! well, I never thought about the ſun ſetting; but to-morrow! oh, to-morrow, mama, Miſs Sleigh may look at all I wiſh to ſhew her."

" Your to-morrow's, my dear Mary, are, (ſaid her ladyſhip, with rather a grave air) your to morrow's are often made of more importance than they ought, and take place of their elder ſiſter."

Miſs Bertram attended her friend at the uſual hour of retiring to her chamber, where ſhe

ſhe ſtaid a conſiderable time, laying down plans for the diſpoſal of the following days, then bidding Alicia good night, ſhe retired. Left alone, ſhe enjoyed a freedom which at ſchool ſhe was unaccuſtomed to, and ſeated herſelf by the fire, muſing on the unexpected unwiſhed for introduction ſhe that day had, through Mr. Meynell, to the Bertram family; for ſhe now was fully certified, that the Sir Robert of Acornbank, and the Baronet of Oakdale hall, were the ſame.

"Oh! my mother! (ſhe ſoftly exclaimed) my beloved, my unfortunate mother, what were your ſufferings!—Ah! what was the horrid, the myſterious miſery you ſo meekly ſuſtained, but which dragged you, an early victim, to the tomb!—Did, as oft I ſuppoſe, your ſorrows originate with the poſſeſſors of Oakdale!"

Alicia ceaſed ſpeaking, and ſat, her eyes fixed on the fire, revolving in her mind all ſhe had, at different times, heard fall from the

the unguarded Kirby; all ſhe could remember hearing from her mother. The former ſerved but to ſtimulate her curioſity, yet could ſcarce lead even to conjecture; for except his having informed her that her father was ſuppoſed to have fallen from the rock he had pointed out to her, into the river which flowed at its foot, and had there found his death, nothing could ſhe aſcertain from what, at various times, he had given hints of to her; but dark and myſterious, they were remembered but to perplex,—but to add more gloomy ideas, if indeed that were poſſible,—as ſhe thought of the awful ſcene at the hour of midnight, revealed to her in the hall of Oakdale by her mother, whoſe ſolemn injunctions ſeemed afreſh to ſound in her ears; yet, not from them, any more than what Mr. Kirby had ſaid, could ſhe draw any certain inference; altho' various conjectures had been formed by her, all had included the family under whoſe roof ſhe now was.

"God grant me (ſaid Alicia, riſing) fortitude to bear, as becomes me, the interval! and when the day of trial comes, may I meet with reſignation the fate I am to ſuſtain."

Throwing back the curtains, and opening the ſhutters of the window, Alicia ſtood gazing on the moon, as ſhe rode through the dark azure of an unclouded ſky, thickly ſtudded with ſtars, whoſe paly fires ſhone with added luſtre from the froſt. The windows of the high ſeated obſervatory reflected the moon beams with a brightneſs, that at the firſt view alarmed Alicia with the idea of fire; ſoon ſhe found the miſtake, and marked the long ſhade of gloom the hill, on which it was ſeated, threw acroſs the winter embrowned woods that ſkirted the banks of a glaſſy ſtream, which in ſpots was ſeen glittering in the ſilver light. The houſe clock had twice been anſwered by that of the village church, proclaiming the morning hour, ere Alicia retired to ſeek the repoſe her ſpirits ſo much needed.

In

In the morning ſhe was accompanied by her lively young friend in the propoſed round; every object charmed—all was new to Alicia.

"What a delightful place (ſaid ſhe) will this be in ſpring, how beautiful in ſummer; here could I wander for days. See, my dear Miſs Bertram, there, over yonder gate, where as the hill breaks off to the weſt, and you catch as it were a glimpſe of the village and church, I ſhould like to take that view."

"Can you take views? I knew you were a proficient in drawing, but thought not it was poſſible you could deſign from nature; and, (continued the gay Mary) you are fond of reading and work.—Oh! Alicia, I fear you will deſpiſe the giddy girl whom you have promiſed to love; ſhe is inferior, far inferior in every accompliſhment, which, equally with yourſelf, ſhe has been taught; but your example will reform me; I will attend more ſteadily; you have patience, I

have none: if I can play a tune once well, I think I ſhall remember it, then I try ſomething elſe, and the muſic is forgot; if then I go to it, I no longer remember what I have been learning in the interval, ſo it is; and my governeſs tells me I talk far, far too much; that it would be better was I liſten."

Miſs Bertram was a year or more older than Alicia, but ſhe was, indeed, far inferior, not in uſeful acquirements alone, but alſo in accompliſhments; except dancing, in which Miſs Bertram ſcarce could be rivalled; and her ſmart air and graceful perſon were ſhewn to peculiar advantage by her elegant movements; her figure was neat and light, and ſhe was rather low than tall of her age: volatile in her temper, and relying on the indulgence of her parents, Miſs Bertram, who had an averſion to aught which bore the appearance of ſtudy, never applied herſelf ſteadily to any thing a ſufficient length of time to acquire it. Her heart was truly amiable, and ſhe had a good,

though

though not, as had Alicia, a ſtrong underſtanding; thus, if we may be allowed to rank their ſouls under different genders, Alicia's might be called a maſculine, Mary Bertram's a feminine underſtanding. Her perception was uncommonly quick, but ſhe either wanted the wiſh or the power to retain what the few firſt leſſons always taught her. Lady Bertram had cautiouſly avoided introducing to her daughters acquaintance any young lady of her own age, conſcious that the character is oft formed from friendſhips ſo early contracted; and vainly had her ladyſhip ſought, in the circle in which ſhe moved, for ſuch a friend as ſhe wiſhed to introduce to her daughter.

Mr. Meynell, when he prefered his requeſt to Lady Bertram, entreating ſhe would notice his orphan ward, had launched out into warm, but deſerved eulogiums. Struck by an account, which roſe to her wiſhes, yet ſeemed as if exaggerated, ſhe wrote to Mrs. Selden; Mr. Meynell, ſhe ſaid, could

not, in ſpeaking of his ward, exaggerated. This then was the friend ſo long ſought for her beloved Mary; her example would be more powerful than precept, and to pay Mr. Meynell at once a compliment, and to ſhew her approbation of Miſs Sleigh, did Lady Bertram go in perſon to Mrs. Selden's for Alicia, who felt the full force of ſo diſtinguiſhed a proof of kindneſs. Every day during the ſtay of our young heroine at Acornbank, did her ladyſhip ſuppoſe ſhe diſcovered ſome new and pleaſing trait in her character.

Sir Robert Bertram joined his lady at Acornbank in the courſe of a few days, he having been detained in London by ſome important affairs being before the Houſe of Commons, of which he was one of its moſt upright members, therefore deemed it not right to deſert his place in it, till the houſe was prorogued for the holidays.

Alicia

Alicia ſaw the good baronet's carriage driving up to the houſe, and felt happy ſhe was in her dreſſing room, where ſhe reſolved to remain, till ſhe recovered from the flutter of ſpirits ſhe found; but here was ſhe ſought by Miſs Bertram.

"Come Alicia, you muſt go ſee Robert, he has enquired for you; but neither Henry nor William are come.—Oh! it is ſo very provoking, when I expected to have ſurpriſed you ſo, and had begged her ladyſhip to ſay nothing about them; they would have walked with us—rode with us—read to us. Ah! Alicia, you would have loved them;—ſo chearful, ſo good humoured, I am ſure I ſcarce can tell whether I love my brother or William March better; this is cruel indeed."

Miſs Bertram talked away all her ſpirits, all her compoſure, and ſhe wept and railed by turns at the diſappointment ſhe had ſuſtained; and the bell had rung for dinner ere

Alicia could prevail with her to be comforted, and accompany her down ſtairs; which done, Lady Bertram introduced her gueſt to Sir Robert, on whom no ſooner had ſhe caſt her eyes, than ſhe trembled, and changing colour, fruitleſsly attempted to anſwer the friendly greetings ſhe received, and ſinking on a chair, fainted. Miſs Bertram was in agonies; in vain Lady Bertram endeavoured to ſtill the exclamations ſhe uttered. The eyes of Alicia again opened, but they opened on Sir Robert; ſhe ſeemed to ſhut them with a kind of horror in her countenance, and heaving a deep and painful ſigh, again fainted. She was laid on the ſofa, and Sir Robert, whoſe appearance it was evident had ſomehow, awakening her ſenſibility, cauſed the emotion that produced his gueſt's illneſs, quitted the room, from whence Miſs Bertram had been before commanded to retire. It was, however, a conſiderable time, notwithſtanding her ladyſhip's attentions, ere Alicia was ſufficiently recovered to apologiſe for the trouble ſhe had

had given, and added, "it was the reſemblance I ſaw in Sir Robert to——" ſhe pauſed, and hid her face with her handkerchief.

"I am highly concerned, my ſweet girl, (ſaid Lady Bertram,) to find you poſſeſs a degree of ſenſibility which muſt expoſe you to many ſevere trials; I ſaw it was the recollection of ſome painful event which Sir Robert's appearance cauſed; the reſemblance, or ſuch as you ſuppoſed ſo, to ſome dear friend; if your loſs is a recent one, I wonder not, but if years have rolled away, I hope it might be owing to ſurpriſe that the likeneſs ſtruck you ſo forcibly, and that you will be enabled to ſee Sir Robert again with leſs emotion."

"Oh! my beloved lady, it is no reſemblance to any friend of mine that Sir Robert bears; but his preſence recalls to me a ſcene deeply imprinted on my mind, ever preſent to it."

"Have you never then, Alicia, ſeen Sir Robert before this day?"

"Never, my lady, I am to Sir Robert equally a ſtranger as I was to you, previous to your kind viſit at Mrs. Selden's."

"Then why were your agitated ſo ſtrongly?"

"Excuſe me, Lady Bertram, on this painful ſubject; would to heaven I could freely diſcloſe why I was agitated at beholding Sir Robert, whoſe reſemblance to an object I once beheld is indeed very ſtriking; but when, how, or where beheld, I am obliged by a ſolemn promiſe to conceal.—Alas! my beloved lady! the fate of the orphan Alicia is wrapped in myſteries, which ſhe dreads to develope."

"On this ſubject, my dear Alicia, I will preſs you no farther," ſaid Lady Bertram.

Alicia retired to her chamber, where ſhe ſpent the remainder of the day. Ah! where thought ſhe is now my boaſted fortitude—vain of thoſe powers of mind providence has thought

thougt fit to endue me with, I proudly have ſuppoſed myſelf equal to all occurrences!—How—how ſhall I—how can I hope to ſuſtain the dreaded trial, when weakly I have ſhrunk at beholding Sir Robert?—Yes, I am deeply humiliated, the moderation I boaſted myſelf upon at Mrs. Selden's originated in pride, for was it not pride which urged me to ſtay—to haughtily overlook inſult?—No—it was not, as I vainly taught myſelf to ſuppoſe, that true fortitude of mind which riſes to occaſion.

Alicia now, with enthuſiaſtic tenderneſs, invoked the ſpirit of her mother; then, with every pious, every virtuous feeling rouſed, kneeled, and prayed to the Almighty for his aid. "Too proudly have I, (ſhe fervently ejaculated) truſted in my own ſtrength! Alas! I had almoſt learned to forget how little—how leſs than nothing I am, without the informing ſpirit of that beneficent being, who ſent me a helpleſs infant

infant into the world—who has endued me, as I grew, with ſtrength of body and mind, which will, if I rely on him who beſtowed them, enable me to ſurmount difficulty and danger."

CHAPTER XI.

IN the morning Alicia met the family at breakfaſt with her uſual compoſure, but it was ſome days ere ſhe felt herſelf in her accuſtomed ſpirits.

The remainder of the time our heroine ſpent at Acornbank, the houſe was crowded with company, choſen out of the firſt ranks in ſociety. Lady Bertram detained Alicia, with Mr. Meynell's permiſſion, (who had quitted Acornbank after a fortnight's ſtay) till their ruturn to town; at which period her

ladyſhip and Miſs Bertram accompanied her to Mrs. Selden's. Scarce would the weeping Mary liſten to comfort, as ſhe parted with her friend, who it was agreed ſhould ſpend the midſummer vacation with her, and in the interim a regular correſpondence was to be kept up; but this, Miſs Bertram declared, would ill ſupply to her the converſation of her friend, whom ſhe would however, ſhe informed her mother, ſtrive to emulate. "I truſt, when I again ſee Alicia, ſhe will think me more worthy of her love and eſteem; indeed I will be leſs volatile."

As our heroine is again at ſchool, again ſubjected to the inſults of a few illiberal minded girls, I think it is needful to explain to my readers from whence aroſe the cruel and unmerited treatment ſhe received.

When Mrs. Dalrymple conſigned her lovely charge to the care of Mrs. Selden, ſhe had informed her, Miſs Sleigh was an orphan,

orphan, both her parents having died in Jamaica. This ſoon was known in the ſchool, where there were a number of Weſt Indian girls, on which account it was a rule, ſtrictly adhered to, that no child of colour, (that is no child of mixed blood whoſe anceſtors within the fourth degree of deſcent were negroes) were admitted there, however exalted her fortune, or future rank in life might be; conſcious a girl ſo ſituated would, from the creole young ladies, meet with many ſlights, and that it would prove a certain ſource of trouble, as in the Weſt Indies the diſtinction is kept up by the women with ſo ſcrupulous an exactneſs, as never to mix, on equal terms, with people ſo deſcended.

The abilities of Alicia excited envy in the hearts of ſome of the young ladies at Mrs. Selden's, whoſe junior ſhe was, yet excelled them in every thing ſhe was taught; and ſorry am I to add, the amiable diſpoſitions of

of our youthful heroine ſerved but to add fuel to the fire her talents had kindled.

At the head of the party was Miſs Aſlabie, a creole of Jamaica, whoſe father poſſeſſed large eſtates in that iſland. This girl, finding it out of her power to render Alicia diſliked, or to make her the object of ridicule to her companions, after making various efforts, at length inſinuated ſhe was a girl of colour. As none of the young ladies belonging to Jamaica could remember any perſon of conſequence whoſe name was Sleigh, therefore, "it might be, as Miſs Aiſlabie ſaid, ſhe might be a girl of colour; and what a ſtrange thing it was of Mrs. Selden to take ſuch a girl into the ſchool; they all agreed their papas and mammas would be highly offended."

Yet, notwithſtanding Miſs Aiſlabie's arts, our heroine had a powerful party who eſpouſed her cauſe, conſiſting chiefly of the younger and middle claſſes of girls, whoſe hearts

hearts felt the full force of her numberleſs amiable and engaging qualities; by theſe was ſhe conſidered as deeply injured, and the ſpirit of party ran as high in the youthful ſociety of Edgecumbe houſe, as it can do in a more auguſt aſſembly; or, as it can do in electing the members of that honorable houſe.

Sometimes, in the bitterneſs of her ſoul, Alicia meditated applying to Mr. Meynel for a removal from her preſent ſituation.—But no; ſhe thought, by quitting Mrs. Selden's, where, from its owner, ſhe had received repeated proofs of regard, ſhe would but give cauſe of triumph to the malicious Miſs Aiſlabie, and her party.—Shrink not, had Mr. Kirby ſaid, from danger or difficulty; it is but by ſuch trials I ſhall obtain that fortitude I have been told is ſo needful I ſhould acquire; it is but by exerciſing them the faculties of the mind attain ſtrength.

Such

Such were the reaſons Alicia confeſſed to herſelf, as actuating her conduct; but a latent, though perhaps not altogether improper pride, urged her ſtay, checked all complains, and taught her to overlook, with an air of conſcious ſuperiority, the indignities her adverſaries meanly ſtooped to practice: deſtitute of all ſtudied revenge, tho' unyielding, ſhe ſteered a courſe, which in a more extended circle might ſerve as a model for prudent conduct. Vainly the little party who looked up to her, as the model of all perfection, entreated leave to ſpeak of the perſecution raiſed againſt their favorite, and oft had ſhe to reſtrain their ardour in her cauſe.

Returned to ſchool, noticed by Lady Bertram, protected by Mr. Meynell, laden with preſents of various elegant trifles, Alicia no longer appeared the ſame being. Miſs Aiſlabie's party decreaſed, every day was ſome one of Alicias perſecutors begging to be received into her favour, ſo that at the commencement

commencement of the midſummer holidays ſcarce a girl in the ſchool, except Miſs Aiſlabie and her ſiſter, but what believed and declared Miſs Sleigh had an equal right with themſelves to the very brilliant complexion ſhe poſſeſſed.

Mr. Meynell came himſelf to Mrs. Selden's for Alicia. In London they joined the Bertram family, and together went into Devonſhire, where Mr. Meynell had a very beautiful ſeat: at this place the family of Bertram were to be gueſts for a month at leaſt, its owner expected. Here was, by the happy Mary, Alicia introduced to her brother, and William March, who was an orphan, our heroine underſtood, brought up by Sir Robert.

"This (ſaid Miſs Bertram) is Henry, this is William, both my brothers; and you, Alicia, ſhall ſhare them with me."

Henry

Henry was a manly and intereſting figure; whatever were his employments or amuſements, *that*, you would have ſuppoſed, from his excelling, he had alone ſtudied. Henry Bertram was at an age, when the boy is nearly loſt in the man; yet Henry ſtill retained the gloſſy ringlets of his cheſnut brown hair, unſoiled by powder, unreſtrained by art. In this haſty ſketch of Henry Bertram I have taken alſo the outlines of his friend, who was not eclipſed by the Baronet's promiſing heir: there was, indeed, a likeneſs between them, that warranted in ſome meaſure the ſurmiſe which had been made in regard to William's birth, and the kindneſs of Lady Bertram, who thus had adopted the boy, was loudly praiſed. Thoſe young men had, as well as Miſs Bertram, chiefly a home education, which was at the earneſt requeſt of Lady Bertram.

"How powerful, (ſaid ſhe) is example—how arbitrary often proves falſe ſhame;—let us not, Sir Robert, expoſe our ſon to temptations,

temptations, his mind muſt yet be too weak to ſtem; let Henry chuſe his friends when his judgement is formed: need I recall to you the early fate of my only brother?—alas! Sir Robert, you well know Lord Malieveren promiſed all that Henry now does, but he fell a victim to the connexions he formed at the college; led away by example, aſhamed to acknowledge the virtuous principles implanted in his breaſt, ſoon—ſoon he threw off all reſtrain—too ſoon he died, a martyr to diſſipation; and I ſhudder at the probability of my child being alſo expoſed to vice, ere he is aware how neceſſary it is he ſhould love virtue.

Such were the fears, ſuch the reaſons, Lady Bertram gave for the plan of education that was adopted, and which ſo far had been ſucceſsful; but in ſaying this, I pretend not to teach, but merely relate.

Time flew with rapid wing at this period with Alicia, who advanced quickly in the good

graces of Mr. Meynell, Sir Robert and Lady Bertram, whilſt with the lively Mary ſhe had become almoſt the ſole object. From Henry and William ſhe received every mark of polite attention, and already ſhe ſeemed to divide with Miſs Bertram their affection.

A month had flown by, unmarked by care, chearfully, and oft improvingly, diverſified; now in rambling round the beautiful grounds with her young friends, or joining in inſtructive converſation with her elder ones; beloved and eſteemed, Alicia at Elmwood forgot the ſlights, the heart wounding inſults ſhe had received from her haughty ſchoolfellows at Mrs. Selden's, to whoſe roof ſhe muſt ſhortly return; when one evening, with Miſs Bertram, Henry and William, Alicia was ſauntering along the ſide of a brook, that ſkirted Mr. Meynell's ground. Mary, who knew no part of William's ſtory, or had ever enquired who he was, ſaid, in her uſual careleſs way—

"I wonder

"I wonder, William, who was your father, did I ever aſk you before."

"Mary, (cried Henry) I well know you are heedleſs, but recollect yourſelf."

"Why, brother, you oft chid me for not thinking, now when I do I diſpleaſe you; and I was thinking to be ſure William is ſome relation to us, elſe why ſhould all the family love him?"

"Who, (replied Henry) that knows my friend, but muſt eſteem him? What need Mary of the ties of blood to render us ſenſible to Miſs Sleigh's amiable qualities."

Alicia bowed; William, who equally with Henry had heard it ſuggeſted they were very nearly connected, looked confuſed by this inadvertent ſpeech.

"Come, (ſaid his friend, taking his arm) let us quit Miſs Bertram, and her ſagacious interrogations."

Mary

Mary could not bear this, but burſting into tears, aſſured Henry, "if he and William were offended ſhe meant it not."—Both hummed, both apologiſed, both ſoothed.

"This ſcene, (ſaid Mr. Bertram) will, I fear, lower the whole party in your regard, Miſs Sleigh; but I will explain why I was diſpleaſed by the queſtion."

At this inſtant Sir Robert joined them, and when they reached the houſe a carriage was juſt driving up, which was followed by another, and Sir Robert introduced Alicia to the Earl of Knaſborough, and his ſon Viſcount Morville, who alighted from the firſt carriage; the other contained Lord and Lady Mountſorrell, whom Alicia had ſeen at Acornbank. This party ſtaid a few days only, and when they quitted Elmwood, were accompanied by Sir Robert, his ſon, and William March, into Wales, where they were going to viſit the Earl of Llandovry, after

after which a tour was to be taken through the principality; from there, accompanied by the Llandovry family, they were to viſit the lakes of Cumberland, and in autumn to join Lady Bertram, at Bertram Caſtle, in Northumberland; ſoon after which Viſcount Morville was to go upon the Continent, as it was intended he ſhould travel till he was of age. The earl of Knaſborough was very urgent with his friend Sir Robert, to allow Henry and William to accompany Lord Morville, but this her ladyſhip was highly averſe to.

"What could it be, (ſaid Miſs Bertram to Alicia, the evening after the gueſts of Mr. Meynell quitted Elmwood) what could it be that I ſaid that evening to vex Henry and William ſo. I am ſure it was a very ſimple queſtion, he was likely to know, and it could be no ſecret, then what do you think it was that offended them."

"I could imagine many circumſtances, but perhaps wide of truth; but do you not know, Mary, whowere the parents of William?"

"Indeed, Alicia, I do not, at leaſt I never recollect hearing; and I am ſure I never will again enquire. Do you recollect the look Henry gave me, and how agitated poor William looked? I dare ſay he is ſome relation, for I have often heard it ſaid he was like Henry."

"There is, (replied Alicia) a reſemblance, but it is more I think in the countenance than features; and two boys, with nearly the ſame diſpoſitions, brought up together and following the ſame purſuits, I think might have their countenances a counterpart of each other, and ſtill be no relations."

"Well, but my dear Alicia, do not you think there is ſome ſecret about William I am not to be informed of.—Oh! I know my mother thinks I am too giddy, and not fit to be truſted; but Suſan once told me Mr. March was my couſin; that Lord Malieveren, my uncle, was his father."

The

The myſtery which appeared to hang over the birth of this youth, ſtrongly recalled to Alicia her own misfortunes, and ſtifling a ſigh, ſhe ſaid, "Whoever are or were Mr. March's parents, they need not have diſowned him; if they live, he ought to be their pride and glory. True, protected by Sir Robert, his fate is an enviable one; yet, if he knew not his parents, I feel for him, and deeply commiſerate what ſuch a ſoul as his may, on that account, be doomed to ſuffer; let not us then, my beloved friend, add to the inquietude he may feel, by childiſhly endeavouring to remove the veil which guards the ſecret."

In about a week after Sir Robert's departure, Lady Bertram, with her daughter, Alicia, and Mr. Meynell, quitted Elmwood. In London our young heroine bade adieu to her ladyſhip and Miſs Bertram, who were going down into the north; by Mr. Meynell, therefore, was ſhe accompanied to Mrs. Selden's.—Alicia's old friends, and new acquired followers crowded round her; Miſs

Aiſlabie was neglected, and appeared ſullen and reſerved; her malicious temper reſted not, though deprived of her late aſſociates; deeper plots were laid, in concert with a young man of inferior ſtation, with whom, during a viſit to her aunt, ſhe clandeſtinely formed an acquaintance; and, bent upon revenging herſelf upon the amiable and conciliating Alicia, ſhe promiſed, as the reward of ſucceſs, her hand, (to which was annexed a large independent fortune) to the aſſociate. From this raſh union, unknown to Mrs. Aiſlabie, was ſhe ſaved by Alicia, defeating at once her plot upon herſelf, and the plan of purpoſed elopement; but the lover, not willing to forego ſo rich a prize, reſolved to make another effort, that effort was a deſperate one: fire was put into a ſtable that belonged to Mrs. Selden, in the idea the inhabitants of Edgecumbe houſe, alarmed by the fright which ſuch an accident would cauſe at midnight, might leave Miſs Aiſlabie at liberty to reach him in the garden, where he took care to inform her he waited.

The

The wind was loud, the flames were quickly communicated to the dwelling-houſe; a few minutes and all was wrapped in ſmoke—a few minutes more and all had periſhed; but Alicia, whoſe mind had been greatly agitated, and whoſe ſuſpicions had been highly rouſed by Miſs Aiſlabie's conduct, was awake; and to her preſence of mind,—to her fortidude and exertions, was the worthy Mrs. Selden and her family indebted, in a very high degree, for their preſervation; and on that night did Alicia ſave, at the hazard of her own life, that of Miſs Aiſlabie, who had been her uniform but uaprovoked enemy.—No longer ſo; this laſt act of generoſity melted even her heart, and wrought a change in her manner, and future conduct in life.

The news of the accident at Edgecumbe houſe reaching Mr. Meynell; he inſtantly ſet out for his ward, who accompanied him to his houſe in London, where he at that period reſided. Painfully had Alicia felt at

humiliating conceſſions Miſs Aiſlabie had made, and modeſtly had ſhe received the praiſes laviſhed by Mrs. Selden, and the thanks of the family for her conduct; in theſe did Mr. Meynell triumph, for he had become highly, warmly attached to our heroine, and was proud of being her protector.

Mr. Meynell wrote to Sir Robert, as did Alicia to Lady Bertram, giving an account of the accident which had befallen Edgecumbe houſe. Thoſe letters were ſpeedily anſwered.

"Come to us, (ſaid the good baronet to Mr. Meynell) bring your ward with you; I am yet not ſufficiently recovered to travel; Miſs Sleigh's ſociety will be joy to Mary, who begins to complain of the dullneſs ſhe experiences at Malieveren."

Lady Bertram, and her daughter alſo, in their letters to Alicia, urged, warmly urged her to viſit them at the Caſtle.

Our

Our heroine however felt a ſtrong repugnance to go into Yorkſhire; ſhe would not be at Malieveren above forty miles from Oakdale, and though ſhe knew it was ſeldom or ever viſited by the family, yet ſhe felt a dread that ſome circumſtance might carry her there; and the Bertram family, as they aſſociated in her mind with the gloomy hall of their anceſtors, and that ſame family, as ſhe had known and loved them, appeared widely diſſimilar.—No, ſhe could not ſupport it;—no, with feelings ſo divided, how could ſhe endure to viſit the place of her birth,—the place where her mother's life was worn down by ſorrow, of a deep, a myſterious kind, to which her fancy preſented no clue, but as ſhe traced it back to the Baronet's family; yet ſhe had no plauſible reaſon to alledge why ſhe wiſhed to refuſe the polite and friendly invitation ſhe had received. Alicia therefore, accompanied by Mr. Meynell, after three eaſy days journey, reached the ſtately Caſtle of Malieveren.

Sir Robert paid our young heroine thoſe eulogiums ſhe ſo juſtly merited, and as Lady Bertram embraced her ſhe wept over the dangers ſhe had ſo nobly ſuſtained.—Tears, careſſes, and enquiries rapidly ſucceeded each other in Miſs Bertram, whilſt the two friends, Henry and William, ſcarce knew whether, as they converſed of Alicia, to talk of her improved grace and beauty, or her wonderful preſence of mind, and promptitude in danger.

Sir Charles Hutton and his family, with Mr. and Mrs. Manby, were upon a viſit at the Caſtle, which was ſeldom without gueſts; when thoſe families quitted it, who were of the neighbourhood, others ſucceeded, and although Malieveren was at a diſtance from any conſiderable town, yet the ſocial diſpoſitions of its owners made it always chearful; and Lady Bertram would ſometimes ſay, "though ſhe was fond of ſociety, yet ſhe hated the diſſipation of eternal engagements, and dreaded returning to London on that

that account." Sir Robert was recovered, and able to travel; but ere he went ſouth, it was neceſſary he ſhould viſit his eſtates in Northumberland, where he was making ſome conſiderable improvements.

At this period Mr. Meynel was gone to York, to viſit a friend, who chiefly reſided there, and Lady Bertram propoſed to the Baronet all the family ſhould accompany him into the north.

Sir Robert ſaid, "his ſtay would be ſo ſhort at Bertram caſtle, that the journey at that ſeaſon would be a fatigue, unaccompanied by any pleaſure."

The two young men, whoſe plan it at firſt was, were now joined by Miſs Bertram, in repreſenting the unuſual fineneſs of the weather and goodneſs of the roads: Sir Robert therefore conſented. The baronet, his lady, with their daughter and Alicia, ſet out in a coach, in which Henry and

William were occaſionally to have ſeats, as they rode, at going off, their own horſes.

Ten days were ſpent at Bertram Caſtle; a name it retained, though it was no longer one, the laſt Baronet having pulled down what time had ſpared of the venerable fabric, and erected on its ſcite a large and elegant modern manſion.

During the ſtay Alicia made in Northumberland, her time was chiefly ſpent, accompanied by her young friends, in various little excurſions; nor was there a high hill, an ancient tower, in both of which that country abounds for ſeveral miles round Bertram, left unviſited by them.

Sir Robert having finiſhed the buſineſs which took him north, ſet out on his return, which, as they had their own horſes, was to be a journey of two days; in purſuance to this plan they ſlept at Durham, from which city they had gone a ſhort way, when

when Henry enquired what diſtance it was to Oakdale. Sir Robert anſwered the queſtion, and Henry ſaid it would not take them many miles out of their road; if it was agreeable to Sir Robert and her ladyſhip they might go that way, as Mary never ſaw it.

"Oh! pray ſir, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) do allow the coach to go that road; Miſs Sleigh never ſaw Oakdale either."

"It can be little gratification, I think Mary, to either you or you friend, to ſee an old houſe, that is, I dare ſay, falling to ruins."

"Well, that is the very reaſon; I am ſure both Alicia and I have gone twice as far to ſee a ruin; have we not William?"

Lady Bertram ſmiled at the earneſtneſs of her daughter: Sir Robert ſaid, he rather wiſhed to viſit Oakdale, but would not go at preſent if Lady Bertram thought the journey would be too much lengthened by going ſo.

" Have you, Sir Robert, (enquired her ladyſhip) buſineſs at Oakdale ?"

" Yes, I wiſh to ſearch there for ſome papers I expected to have found at Bertram, and think it is probable they may be there ; a fooliſh kind of claim is made for the Oakdale eſtate, though as yet ſcarce known by whom."

Lady Bertram declared her acquieſence, to the great joy of Mary, and diſtreſs of Alicia, who feared the viſit to Oakdale might, by the agitation ſhe would feel, betray the ſecret ſhe was commanded to keep ; but endeavouring to exert herſelf, and conceal her emotions, ſhe enquired of Sir Robert if Oakdale was uninhabited, and if it had long been ſo ?

" At preſent, (he replied) the garden, I believe, is let ; but the houſe itſelf has no inhabitant but a woman, who keeps fires to prevent its quite going to decay, which I would not wiſh, as it is the moſt ancient ſeat belonging to the family ; and which, at one

one period, they took the title of baron from. My father, after his marriage, ſcarce ever viſited it, I have been told, as Acorn-bank came into the family by my mother, ſhe preferred it to Oakdale; nor did ſhe often viſit the north, which ſhe diſliked ſo much, that it was with difficulty ſhe conſented to the building Bertram caſtle."

"And has then, Sir Robert, (enquired Mary) no one lived at Oakdale-hall ſince before you were born."

"Yes, my aunt Mildred Bertram lived there, chiefly, all her life, and alſo died at Oakdale. Since my father's death, there alſo my ſiſter Jane, who was ſeveral years elder than me, ſought refuge with Mrs. Mildred from the diſtreſs which ſurrounded her; Jane married very young, a gay and diſſipated man, of her own age, who after living in a way which a ducal income could ſcarce ſupport, was obliged to quit England on account of the debts he had contracted; in the Eaſt he acquired a large fortune, with

with which he returned to England, ſoon after my ſiſter had, at Oakdale, ceaſed to exiſt; and his ſon, the only child they had, no one knew what had become of. My aunt Mildred had bought him a commiſſion: but this, and every thing he could ſpend was gone, and I ſuppoſe he died in France, from whence his laſt letters to me were dated. Mr. Meynel, (ſaid Sir Robert, turning to Alicia) your guardian Miſs Sleigh, though now one of the worthieſt and moſt reſpectable characters I know, was the gay diſſipated huſband of my ſiſter."

"I thank you, Sir Robert, (replied Alicia,) for I might, by ſpeaking of Oakdale to Mr. Meynell, have recalled his griefs."

"The hall has though, I think, (ſaid her ladyſhip) been tenanted ſince Mrs. Meynel's death."

"For a ſhort time it was, and I was talking to Jackſon only the other day about the perſon who took it, of whom I knew nothing, except his being a ſtranger; but I have

have learned quite a little hiſtory of him, in which I felt much intereſted."

"O! pray do then indulge us, by communicating it, my dear ſir," ſaid Miſs Bertram.

"I was about to do ſo Mary," replied the baronet.

Alicia ſickened at the ſound, and pulling down the glaſs, called Sir Robert's attention to the proſpect, which, although in the month of February, was, notwithſtanding, beautiful; for they were deſcending the hill to North Oak, and the beautiful vale of Oakdale lay ſtretched in full perſpective below them.

"Can we ſee the hall?" enquired Mary.

No, was the anſwer given; "but there, almoſt at the extreme end of the vale, that little wood lays on a riſing ground near, and yonder is the river which winds through the vale, and runs cloſe paſt the hall;" but Mary again begged for the ſtory that had

intereſted the baronet, and which was yet freſh in his memory.

" Of the perſon who originally took Oakdale, Jackſon knew little but his name, which was Bouchier; he married a young woman of the name of Wetherall, whoſe grandfather I believe it was, rented a farm in the vale of mine. Bouchier, it was ſaid, fell over a rock which overhung the river that runs paſt the houſe, leaving this poor young woman with a very ſlender proviſion; although, during his life, he kept a carriage and a retinue of ſervants; and it was ſuſpected this Mr. Bouchier had been ſome perſon that had acquired money in a ſad way, as he was never almoſt ſeen by any one. Some months after his death, the poor young woman he had married gave birth to a daughter, ſoon after which it was conjectured ſhe found out what ſort of a perſon ſhe had ſo haſtily connected herſelf with, and died when her child was about eight years of age, broken hearted.—So amiable, ſo young, and ſo lovely, I with

Jackſon

Jackſon ſeverely blamed her adviſers to a match with a perſon, whom four weeks previous to her marriage ſhe had never ſeen."

"But the child, (enquired William March) pray Sir Robert what became of the child?"

"A Scotch lady of ſome fortune took it to bring up, and I underſtand it is now in Scotland."

Alicia, with her head out of the coach window, ſtrove to conceal her emotions.—Had ſhe at the moment followed the dictates of her heart, ſhe would have exclaimed, "yes, I am the helpleſs orphan! I am the daughter of the unfortunate—not guilty Mrs. Bouchier! I am the child of the wretched Eliza!" Trembling, and at the point of fainting, the pity ſhe heard expreſſed as the converſation continued, equally for her mother and herſelf, brought tears to her aid; they were obſerved, but attributed to the ſenſibility of her ſoul, which felt for the

the ſorrows of thoſe to whom ſhe was a ſtranger. At length rouſing herſelf, ſhe apologized for the effect the converſation had produced on her, who was ſimilarly ſituated :—" I too, (ſaid ſhe) am an orphan, like the child of the unfortunate Mrs. Bouchier, am protected by ſtrangers."

" Had Mrs. Bouchier no friends," enquired Henry.

" Yes, a perſon of the name of Kirby, a ſurgeon at St. Mary Oak, who, after her deceaſe, by my permiſſion, lived in the hall till within a few years, when quitting it he went no one knew whither; but he was, I find, always an eccentric character, and of late his brain was much affected."

" Oh! I dare ſay, (ſaid William) by this time the inhabitants of St. Mary Oak have ſeen his ſpirit, whether he is dead or alive."

" It will indeed, (ſaid Henry) perfectly agree with the idle and ſuperſtitious tales thoſe credulous people, I underſtand, believe regarding the hall."

" What

"What kind of tales, Henry?" enquired Miſs Bertram.

"Such, Mary, as I want patience to repeat, as I did at the time I heard them to attend, which was when William and I laſt autumn called at Oakdale, in our road from the Lakes; and if you are any way ſolicitous to learn the gambols held by the ghoſts who viſit or reſide in the hall, our informer ſtill lives in it."

"Why did you not inform me of this before? Well, it is charming; oh! how much I ſhould like to ſleep in the hall, and to hear a dialogue between Alicia and a ghoſt."

"Fye Mary, (ſaid Lady Bertram, with a chiding look) why do you run on in ſuch a giddy way? What ſort of pleaſure could poſſibly reſult to you from ſpending a night at the hall, which muſt be deſtitute of every thing like comfort, and where beds doubtleſs muſt be damp? Always pauſe before you ſpeak."

Again

Again the converſation turned upon who this Mr. Bouchier could be, and again the ſorrows of his widow and child were the topic, till the young men were wrought up to a kind of enthuſiam on the ſubject. So young—ſo amiable—ſo lovely—and unbefriended—were epithets Alicia, with a heart agonized by her ſuppreſſed feelings, heard beſtowed on her beloved and unhappy mother.

"And ſhe was buried at St. Mary's Oak," ſaid Henry.

"Yes, (replied Sir Robert) her friend, the benevolent but eccentric ſurgeon of the village, Jackſon told me, erected a white ſtone to her memory, which, in the moſt elevated ſpot in the church-yard, marks her grave."

"Gentle ſufferer, (ſaid William) in heaven I truſt ſhe is rewarded."

"There is the church," ſaid Mary, her eyes now gliſtening with the ſoft drop of pity, and all her late gaiety fled.

Sir

Sir Robert ordered the coachman to ſtop when oppoſite the church.

" Ay, there, (ſaid he) that is the ſpot," and the good baronet paſſed his hand acroſs his eyes.

Henry and William were preparing to leap out, that they might read the inſcription friendſhip had erected to ſuffering virtue, when Alicia, no longer able to contend with her feelings, ſunk inſenſible on the ſhoulder of Henry.

CHAPTER XII.

THE coach was ordered ſlowly to proceed.

" Thoſe faintings, (ſaid Lady Bertram, as ſhe bathed the temples of Alicia with hartſhorn) argue an alarming delicacy of conſtitution; her mind is too keenly ſuſceptible; ſhe has I fear to ſuffer much, ere her feelings acquire that ſtate of apathy neceſſary in a free commerce with the world."

A ſervant

A ſervant, who had been diſpatched to procure the aſſiſtance of Mr. Kirby's ſucceſſor at St. Mary Oak, now returned, with intelligence he was from home. The carriage was ordered to proceed quickly, and by this time Alicia opened her eyes, yet when they reached the hall ſhe was unable to walk acroſs the court. Henry inſiſted on carrying her, which he did, into the Oak dining room, where, having ſeated her on the couch, he enquired, with much earneſt tenderneſs in his looks and voice, how ſhe felt herſelf.

"Oh! Henry, I am very childiſhly weak! you muſt deſpiſe me, and I cannot bear the idea!"

The tears of Alicia fell on the ſupporting arm of Henry.

"Deſpiſe you Alicia, no; the ſenſibility of your character but endears you to my ſoul; never, Alicia, can Henry Bertram ceaſe to eſteem, to love you."

Alas!

Alas! Henry, my dear friend, I am—(ſhe pauſed as if recollecting herſelf) Oh! this ſad, this cruel journey—oh! you know not the agony this morning I have ſuſtained!—If you love my peace—if you regard my happineſs—I conjure you to entreat Sir Robert quickly to leave Oakdale; indeed I cannot much longer bear the conteſt I feel."

Lady Bertram and Mary, who had been detained a few minutes; the former by giving orders, the latter by looking at the armour in paſſing through the hall, now entered; a ſervant followed with wine and biſcuits from the coach, of which, at her ladyſhip's deſire, Alicia partook, and declared ſhe was greatly refreſhed, nay quite well, and apologiſed for her weakneſs of mind and body.

Sir Robert and William now joined the party, and he informed them that the coach, in paſſing the corner of the wall, was overturned, and ſo damaged, it would take a conſiderable time to repair it, "and I fear we

we ſhall not be able to proceed in it to-day."

Henry, mindful of what Alicia had ſaid, propoſed ſending to North Oak for poſt chaiſes.

"I thought of doing ſo, (replied the baronet) and ordered James to ſet out inſtantly as I learned the accident; but he ſays only three chaiſes are kept at North Oak, two of which we met this morning on the road to Durham, and the third is gone weſt, through St. Mary's, therefore we muſt either ſleep here, or procure beds in the village."

"Carriages, (ſaid Henry) might, be had, doubtleſs, from Durham or Darlington."

"The diſtance from both places, Henry, (ſaid his mother) will render it impoſſible; a ſervant could not go and they reach us till after it was dark, aud I think we had better reſt ſatisfied in this old manſion, than

endanger all our lives by travelling after dark in ſuch a crazy equipage as we may chance to procure."

"By all means, (ſaid the baronet) I have already given orders to ſend to the croſs keys, the village tavern, in order to procure aſſiſtance towards a dinner; and you, Lady Bertram, will prefer ſtaying here, I ſuppoſe, to ſuch kind of paltry accommodations as St Mary Oak can afford."

"I dare ſay I ſhall, (replied her ladyſhip) but will look over the apartments, when I ſhall be better enabled to judge."

"Oh! I am ſure you will ſtay here, (ſaid Mary) it would be very wrong indeed to quit the poor old houſe for a cottage at St. Mary's.

Miſs Bertram attended her mother in the inveſtigation ſhe made of the apartments, and fixed on that ſhe and Alicia were to occupy. Fires were inſtantly lighted in the chambers, and her ladyſhip took every poſſible precaution

againſt the danger of taking cold from the damp.

Alicia, whoſe late indiſpoſition was a very ſufficient excuſe, did not accompany her ladyſhip and Miſs Bertram in the viſitations they made, but remained in the Oak dining parlour with Henry, who vainly endeavoured, by varying the converſation, to enliven his fair companion.

"I think, (ſaid he at length) this gloomy houſe is ſufficient to depreſs the moſt lively ſpirits; I dare ſay a months reſidence here would render Mary herſelf dull."

"Gloomy indeed, (ſighed out Alicia) mournfully ſad it appears to me! yet, Henry, you know not why thus I talk; I would, oh yes, fain I would diſcloſe to you what ſwells at my heart; with a painful ſenſe of grief—of—of horror! Alas! I have ſeen—though I underſtand not—and, what I beheld may equally concern you Henry as myſelf; but blame me not--condemn

me not for a reſerve on this ſubject; I have been awed to ſilence, and I have ſworn, yes, ſolemnly ſworn, never to reveal, at leaſt never till—but even now do I not infringe on that promiſe?—Alas! I am inadequate to the taſk required of me, but you, Henry, will not betray me as I have done myſelf."

The promiſes of Henry might ever be depended upon, of whatever nature they were; and Henry now promiſed, and Alicia firmly relied on that promiſe, as he aſſured her no circumſtance ſhould ever tempt him to reveal the hints ſhe had given.

"If hereafter, Alicia, you deem yourſelf at liberty, and then think me worthy of your confidence, reveal to me the myſtery that now ſo painfully oppreſſes you, my fortune, my ſervices, my whole life ſhall be devoted to the friendſhip I am inſpired with."

Alicia's words, but her countenance, more forcibly expreſſed her gratitude, her firm

firm reliance on his friendſhip, which, ſhe ſaid, might hereafter be called upon to aſſiſt her: "Already, Henry, I have told you a part of my various feelings, yet ſo myſterious is the cauſe of my emotions, that you muſt be left only to ſuppoſition to trace their ſource.

Lady Bertram and Mary returned, ere a converſation ſo intereſting to Henry, ſo ſoothing, yet ſo agitating to our heroine, was concluded.

"Ah! Alicia, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) I declare you and Henry look as if you had ſeen ſome of the ſpectres belonging to the hall; pray tell me how it appeared, what it ſaid, and how it vaniſhed?

"I wiſh Mary you had to reſide here for twelve months, (ſaid her ladyſhip) I think this gloomy, deſolate, and forſaken manſion would give a different ſhade to your mind; you are ſo volatile; I tell you child, though I am myſelf not ſuperſtitious, nor

a believer in ghoſts and goblins, yet I think the light jeſt, and the frivolous remarks made on ſuch ſubjects, improper; every thing is poſſible with the Creator of all, and you may be puniſhed, by your own imagination figuring to you an appearance of reality where none exiſts; people of brighter and more enlightened talents have ſo ſuffered."

Mary looked, and was grave for a few minutes, but Lady Bertram quitting the room, ſhe roſe to examine the old-faſhioned carved work above the wide extended chimney piece; there was ſufficient fund of entertainment for the lively girl, who ſoon forgot the grave leſſon ſhe had ſo lately received,

"Will you go Alicia and look at your chamber, it is a charming room; I am ſure you will be quite enchanted; well then, you will not go, it will greatly ſurpriſe you.—Oh! I dare ſay we ſhall ſee the ghoſts, ſo I told

told my mother, and ſhe gave me a reprimand then; ſuch diſmal apartments—the moths have ſo eaten the damaſk bed and hangings—the chimneys are ſo wide—and the windows ſo dark—the floors, I never ſaw ſuch, all oak—black oak—cut, Sir Robert ſaid, when all this vale was covered with wood."

Thus rattled the light hearted Mary till dinner was announced, which was ſerved in the new dining room with no great degree of elegance, yet with more appearance of comfort than could have been ſuppoſed. The remainder of the evening was ſpent by Sir Robert in the ſearch after the papers he had ſpoken of; Lady Bertram chatted with the young people, till the baronet's return, who appeared not in his uſual chearful ſpirits, but gloomy and abſtracted; at an early hour he propoſed retiring for the night, and followed by Lady Bertram, quitted the apartment.

Alicia as ſhe paſſed the room generally occupied by her mother, in her way to the ſtaircaſe ſhuddered; the door was open—the furniture was gone—it looked deſolate and abandoned; ſlowly, heavily, ſhe began to aſcend the lofty ſtaircaſe, whilſt Mary was gaily commenting on the pictured forms of her anceſtors, which hung againſt the ſides, darkly wainſcoted with oak. Scarcely could Alicia ſupport herſelf, ſcarce drag her trembling limbs up thoſe ſteps, that in early childhood ſhe had oft playfully run. Henry advanced.

"You yet, Alicia, ſeem ill, allow me to aſſiſt you; (then lowering his voice, he continued) you are agitated by no common cauſe—ſure ſomething in this houſe recalls paſt ſcenes; would to heaven I was ſuffered to partake of your grief! I will not dare to enquire, if the ſurmiſe is a real one that I have made—but circumſtances concur in ſome meaſure,——the orphan child of the unfortunate Eliza——"

The

The ſpeech was never finiſhed by Henry, for Alicia lifted her tearful eyes from the ground to his; the look of anguiſh—the ſad expreſſion they contained—chained in icy fetters the tongue of Henry, and ſpoke to his heart in a language painfully eloquent.—They had reached the gallery that ran along the whole length of the houſe; here Miſs Bertram met with a freſh ſource of entertainment, and continued, in her lively way to criticiſe on whatever preſented itſelf, to the high entertainment of Mr. March.

Alicia lingered at a large window, partly of painted glaſs, which lighted one end of the gallery; the moon had riſen, but ſhrouded with clouds, caſt a dull and uncertain light, yet ſufficient to ſhew her, on whoſe memory theſe ſcenes were deeply imprinted, the dark wood where oft ſhe had wandered with her mother—ſhe ſighed ſadly, deeply—the hand of Alicia was preſſed to the ſympathiſing boſom of Henry, who endea-

voured to draw her attention to the remarks of his lively ſiſter; but engroſſed by painful recollection, ſhe obſerved not the attempt.

"Oh! Henry, (ſaid ſhe) this is agony; every ſcene ſo freſhly—" ſhe pauſed.

Agoniſed by her own feelings, ſoothed by the kind ſympathy of Mr. Bertram, Alicia was thrown off her guard, and painfully did ſhe feel the ſilence impoſed upon her. Could ſhe have diſcloſed her doubts—her fears—the terrors of Oakdale would have been leſſened; but her feelings were rouſed to agony when they reached the door of Sir Philip's chamber, that chamber where at the hour of midnight ſhe had liſtened to her mother; and where ſhe diſcloſed to her, when a child, ſcarce paſt the years of infancy, a ſcene which had power to awe her to ſilence for years. At the door of this room, the terror of the pariſh

Miſs

Miſs Bertram ſtoped, whilſt the ſervant who lighted them opened the door. Alicia ſhrunk back, and uttered a low involuntary ſcream: "not here—Oh! not here," ſhe exclaimed, with a trembling voice.

"Nay, Alicia, do not be frightened, I am ſure I am not."

Alicia graſped the arm of Henry with a convulſive kind of motion.—"Oh! not here, I cannot ſleep here, Miſs Bertram."

Her friend drew her in gaily: "Now look round, there is nothing to alarm you."

"Very true, (ſighed out Alicia, as ſhe threw herſelf upon a ſeat) here is nothing to terrify me." The eyes of Alicia, were, however, roving round the room with an expreſſion of terror unſpeakable.

"Your mornings illneſs (ſaid Henry) has cauſed your preſent diſcompoſure."

"I ſuppoſe it has, replied Alicia) for I am fully ſenſible of my weakneſs in this affair."

"I was

" I was, indeed, aſtoniſhed, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) for on every other occaſion you uſed to be quite an heroine compared to me."

Henry and William bidding them good night, the two friends ſeated themſelves by the fire, which was large enough almoſt to have roaſted an ox.

" I am ſure, (ſaid Alicia) this chearful blaze is ſufficient to diſpel the gloomy ideas which have filled my brain to day."

" Do you feel oppreſſed by thoſe fears now, Alicia?"

No—oh! no.—It was a nervous indiſpoſition of my mind which made me dread every thing, but now I feel it not."

" Then, my ſweet girl, be not offended, and I will tell you why I choſe this room; when we came to the door it was locked, and the woman who lives in the houſe ſcarce would own ſhe had a key, which, you may be ſure, made me very impatient; at length the

the key was found. 'Your ladyſhip for *ſartain* does not know this is Sir Philip's room.' Open the door, ſaid I, and when we got in ſhe told me ſuch a ſtory—but I will not tell you now Alicia; however, I reſolved that this ſhould be the chamber we would occupy, as it would be ſo charming if we could find out what it is that frightens every body regarding it; and I have been puzzling myſelf all this evening thinking what it can be."

Miſs Bertram propoſed to Alicia ſitting up all night, but this ſhe ſtrongly oppoſed; and ſoon after, Mary finding ſhe grew ſleepy, went to bed; Alicia promiſed to follow her, but again ſeated by the fire, ſat forgetful ſhe had done ſo. Thoroughly abſorbed in her own reflections, ſad and mournful images roſe in painful ſucceſſion, and doubts of a horrid, but uncertain nature, filled her ſoul.—What—who was her father? how was ſhe, by ſome myſterious way, connected with the family under whoſe roof

roof ſhe was ſheltered? For there were circumſtances had almoſt certified her ſome ſuch connexion exiſted.—Now the ſoftened recollection of her mother dimmed her eyes ſhe recollected her gentleneſs—her piety—and the virtues for which ſhe that day had heard her praiſed; to obey implicitly ſuch a mother ſhould be her pride.—Yes, the awful promiſe ſhould ever be held ſacred, but as Alicia thought of that promiſe, different ideas intruded—vague and terrible images again uſurped the dominion—and a thought croſſed her mind that then, even then, the truth of thoſe uncertain but horrible ſurmiſes ſhould, however horrid, yet be decidedly aſcertained; ſhe roſe, and relighted her candle, yet, ſpite of the deſperate reſolution ſhe had taken, it trembled in her hand.

I will, however, thought ſhe, firſt read this, taking out the letter, left by Mr. Kirby for her, when he quitted England; the addreſs upon it was an injunction not to open it till ſhe was ſixteen, unleſs he returned before.

before. Alas! thought ſhe, never will Mr. Kirby return to the forſaken Alicia.—Here no promiſe binds me—and, with a kind of deſperation, ſhe turned over the packet;—her fingers reſted on the ſeal, when a deep ſigh arreſted her attention; thrice ſhe heard her own name repeated, the letter dropped from her hand, and fearfully her eyes wandered round the room, as if expecting they would encounter ſome frightful and unuſual appearance, but none ſuch was ſeen; then recalling her recollection and fortitude, ſhe roſe, and looked upon her friend, whoſe voice ſhe now ſuppoſed it was which had called her, as frequently ſhe had been known to talk whilſt aſleep.

"I am weak, very weak indeed, thus to be ſtartled, (ſhe ſoftly ſaid, as ſhe walked acroſs the floor;) the horrid ſcenes here acted ſhould not effect me, who am innocent of ſuch crimes; why then need I fear?" But at that inſtant, as if beneath her feet, groans deep and deadly ſeemed to iſſue, and lifting

lifting her eyes, a ſpectre pale, ghaſtly, and disfigured with wounds ſtarted from the dark wainſcot, with a mournful movement of its head. For a ſecond of time Alicia fixedly obſerved it; but here the early leſſon of fortitude ſhe had in that very room been taught, deſerted her; the eyes of Alicia cloſed, and ſhe ſunk on the floor. It was but a ſhort inſenſibility ſhe experienced; yet, as ſhe recovered, ſcarce dared ſhe lift again her ſight to the ſpot where ſo ſtrange, ſo dreadful an appearance had been diſcloſed; it was gone, but a loud noiſe echoed through the houſe—again it ceaſed—again it was heard—the hollow rumbling ſound now convinced Alicia, though the ſeaſon was an unuſual one for it, that it was thunder; terrified ſhe haſtily undreſſed, and went to bed, but ſleep was baniſhed; what was the horrid appearance ſhe had ſeen was the firſt queſtion that occurred to her.

Lady Bertram had ſaid to her daughter, ſhe might be puniſhed for her giddy trifling, that

that her imagination might be ſo far embodied as to preſent to her ſenſes an appearance of reality where none exiſted; all things are, as her ladyſhip remarked, poſſible to the being who made all; by ſome ſuch appearance, thought Alicia, my ſenſes have doubtleſs been impoſed upon; the ſubjects that have engroſſed me all night, the vicinity to horrid realities, were well calculated to diſturb my mind. Alicia then recollected the place where ſhe had ſeen this ghoſtly form. The candle had, with the letter, dropped from her hand, and was extinguiſhed, and the light from the fire, which was no longer a bright blaze, reached very partially that part of this ſpacious apartment; ſhe was under the influence of fear—ſhe might be wholly miſtaken—thus reaſoned Alicia with herſelf, when another idea roſe to her mind, in which herſelf, and the memory of thoſe who were moſt dear to her heart, were ſtrangely and myſteriouſly connected with what had been unfolded to her; but this idea

idea was too horrid, ſhe could not bear it—no—it was impoſſible it ſhould be ſo.

Alicia roſe, and wrapping her gown round her, kneeled by the bedſide; fervently ſhe prayed for the protection of the Almighty, to guard her alike from real or ſuppoſed dangers; from the latter ſhe humbly entreated for that fortitude ſhe had been early taught to cultivate in her ſoul.—"Alas! the leſſon has, (ſhe exclaimed) been ill remembered by me; impatiently this night did I ſeek to evade the ſolemn promiſe I made to wait the appointed time."

The thunder, which had continued with little intermiſſion, now ceaſed, and the rain, which had poured down in torrents, was no longer heard as it fell with violence from the projecting ſpouts of the roof. As Alicia roſe from her devotions, ſhe felt the ſtorm in her own breaſt alſo calmed, and putting aſide the curtain, ſhe ſtood gazing on the ſky, as the moon broke through the dark boſoms of the

the heavy clouds, which receded from the weſtern wind, and ſhewed her the terrace where many a happy hour had, in infancy, been ſpent by her. Freſhly was the ſcene recalled when Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple were thrown from their phaeton over the wall, and Alicia ſtood with her eyes fixed on the ſpot; the moon beans fell on the bare boughs of the walnut tree, and piercing through them, ſhewed a figure ſeated on the place Alicia had oft ſeen her mother. It roſe, and paſſing along, was loſt in the gloom; momentarily it imerged, and again diſappeared, but Alicia felt no alarm; this was by no means connected with the terror ſhe ſo lately felt, and ſhe feared not the figure was a midnight ruffian, who lurked there for robbery and murder; it was, ſhe ſuppoſed, ſome poor, deſolate wanderer, who there had taken refuge from the fury of the ſtorm. The clouds thickened and obſcured again the moon, whilſt a heavy ſhower fell; Alicia ſighed, as ſhe thought of the unhouſed wretch expoſed to it, whom the

the darkneſs now prevented her from beholding, and again returning to where Mary lay wrapt in ſleep, ſhe ſtretched herſelf on the bed, which many years had been un-occupied.

The ſpirits of Alicia, harraſſed by the occurrences of the day, by the terror which had filled her mind to a degree that ſhe had reaſon to think had conjured up falſe appearances to her ſight, now ſunk under the heavy influence of ſleep; but not quiet and gentle ſlumber, as in general hovered over her pillow, even in ſleep ſhe felt the heavy oppreſſion that ſat on her ſoul, and her viſions partook of the agitation ſhe had ſuſtained.

Alicia ſeemed again to behold her mother, who appeared but to chide. Is this then the fortitude I hoped my leſſons had taught; my laſt SOLEMN INJUNCTIONS are forgotten by my child—ſhe diſregards them—the ſecrecy enjoined oppreſſes the weak mind of Alicia—

ſhe

ſhe ſhrinks before imaginary terrors; but remember the trial—remember if ſuch is your conduct you are unworthy of the early confidence repoſed in you—and unworthy the fate which yet may be yours.

As Alicia waked, ſhe mentally promiſed future obedience to the commands of her mother.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XIII.

THE morning was clear and frosty, notwithstanding the terrible night, and William proposed to the young ladies a walk in the garden, the style of which was equally as antique as that of the house.

Miss Bertram, however, insisted on having another peep at the apartments, and told Alicia, if she did not also go, she should suppose she really was afraid. Henry was about to speak, but Alica gaily complied with her friends request, who led the way to the

the ſuite of apartments fitted up on the marriage of the preſent baronet's grandfather; theſe were never remembered by Alicia, otherwiſe than as now ſhe beheld them, unfurniſhed and deſolate, for ſo they were when Mr. Bouchier came to the hall, and ſo they remained, after the elegant furniture he had bought was ſold; but on entering her mothers apartment, which afterwards had been occupied by Mr. Kirby, it acquired all the fortitude ſhe could collect to ſupport her againſt the many tender recollections it recalled; ſhe dreaded again a repetion of the faintings her ſuppreſſed emotions had cauſed the preceding day.

Henry aſſiduouſly watchful of her expreſſive countenance, marked she agitation it diſplayed, and hurried his ſiſter along.

"Oh! now for one more look into Sir Philip's chamber, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) was it not very croſs of the ghoſt laſt night never to take a peep at us."

"Perhap

"Perhaps it might, Mary, (ſaid William) and you, equally as inſenſible to the honour as you were to the thunder, which never waked you."

When they were in the dreaded apartment, Miſs Bertram, in her uſual gay manner, commented upon the furniture, and the moſt probable form the ſpirit would make its appearance in. "If, (ſaid ſhe) it is Sir Philip, I am almoſt ſure of the very dreſs."

"And pray, Mary, what may that dreſs be, which, like our natures, can partake of the material and immaterial, (ſaid Henry, gravely) but have done with this trifling, we ſhall ſpend all the day here."

"Henry, you are grown ſo grave and demure, I proteſt I ſhall be as afraid to open my mouth to you as if Sir Philip was to ſtand before me there, in the ſuit of armour which hangs in the hall, that he wore at the taking of Cadiz, for I dare ſay that is the dreſs he appears in."

"Come

"Come along, you giddy thing, (ſaid Henry) taking hold of her arm."

"Nay, only let me look at myſelf in this glaſs, which I have not dared to do yet, leſt I ſhould ſee more faces than my own.—Now Henry and William you ſtand there, whilſt Alicia and I walk up to it; ſo, taking hold of her friend, ſhe began to advance, laughing as ſhe went, then raiſed her eyes, as did Alicia, but inſtantly, with a loud ſhriek, fled out of the room; whilſt Henry advancing to the pale and trembling Alicia, would have led her to a ſeat.

"Let us go, Henry, (ſaid ſhe, in a voice ſcarcely articulate,) oh! this room, this horrid room."

"What has alarmed you," enquired Henry, as he led her out.

"It was but a ſhadow I ſaw nothing but a reflection, though a terrible one."

They had reached the ſtaircaſe, but the ſteps of the terrified Mary, who was followed

by William March, were heard in the ſtone paſſage at its foot.

" My late apparent gaiety, my again yielding to fear, alike unintelligible to you, Henry, requires an apology.—Alas! I dare offer none, and you will accuſe me of a levity, far, at this period, from my heart. I muſt, however, (continued Alicia, as they reached the bottom of the ſtaircaſe) endeavour to collect myſelf, and will paſs through the ſaloon into the court, where, or on the terrace, you will find me ready to accompany Miſs Bertram round the garden."

Henry would have diſſuaded Alicia from reviſiting ſcenes that muſt again awaken her ſenſibility.

" No, Henry, (ſhe ſaid) I muſt, it is my duty to oppoſe, not ſink under my feelings."

Henry

Henry joined the party in the dining room, whilſt Alicia, going through the ſaloon, and croſſing a corner of the court, reached the terrace; ſtill the woodbine was twined round the walnut-tree, but the ſeat, the favorite ſeat of her mother was gone, ſave ſome worm eaten rails that yet lay heaped in one corner; haſtily ſhe turned from what filled her with painful recollection.

"Alas! my beloved mother, what a ſad inheritance did you bequeath your child," ſighed out Alicia, as haſtily ſhe paced the terrace walk; ſoon ſhe ſaw her friends enter the garden, by the door which opened from the dining room; and endeavouring to give a gay caſt to her countenance, an expreſſion foreign to her heart, ſhe advanced to meet them.

"Oh! Alicia, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) pray what did you ſee; for theſe wretches are, one of them ſcolding, and the other ridiculing me, till I have loſt my patience,

ſo do convince them that I ſaw a pale, ghaſtly face peep over Henry's ſhoulder."

"I cannot pretend to ſay what you ſaw, Mary, (replied Alicia) I was looking in the glaſs."

"So was I, dear Alicia; you are as vexatious as Henry and William, it was in the glaſs I ſaw it, what did you ſee?"

"What ſhould I ſee, do you ſuppoſe, but your face and mine."

"I declare now, Alicia, I believe you only mean to vex me; however, I know, that if Sir Robert would give me the Oakdale eſtate, it ſhould not tempt me to ſpend another night in the hall, or to look in that frightful glaſs again."

They paſſed through the door which opened into the wood, and took the path that led to the projecting rock, from which the unhappy Mr. Bouchier had, in all probability, precipitated himſelf. Henry had oppoſed quitting the garden, but Alicia felt a kind of impulſe that hurried her along.

"Yes,

"Yes Henry, I will go, encourage not my weakneſs," ſhe ſaid.

"And this is the ſpot; alas! then here it was, (ſaid the gentle hearted Mary) that the raſh Mr. Bouchier threw himſelf down. I cannot ſuppoſe he was a perſon inured to guilt, he had been oppreſſed, perhaps, by ſome peculiar circumſtances."

"So I ſhould ſuppoſe, (ſaid William) and lament his ſad fate."

"And then, oh! William, (ſaid the weeping girl,) his young, his lovely wife, I think how oft ſhe would come, and walk in this gloomy wood."

Mary ſtooped down, and looked over the rock to where the river rolled far over its pebbly bed. Alicia, with a heart agoniſed by the ideas that whirled in ſad ſucceſſion through her brain, leaned againſt a tall aſh, and whilſt the arm of Henry ſupported hers, it trembled, and the anxious ſolicitude he felt was ſtrongly imprinted on every feature.

"Oh! why Alicia thus expoſe yourſelf to ſcenes ſo painful; I fear greatly for the effect they muſt have upon you."

A ſervant now came to inform them Sir Robert and Lady Bertram waited their return, the coach being already at the gate.

Mary now roſe, and with William led the way, and ere they reached the court, where the baronet and his lady joined them, Alicia had, (ſoothed by the affectionate friendſhip of Henry,) regained, in ſome degree, her compoſure; whilſt Mary, whoſe tears ſo ſhort a time before had been ſhed to the ſorrows of the late inhabitants of Oakdale, now had reſumed her uſual gaiety of heart and manner.

Seated in the carriage, Alicia's eyes remained fixed upon the high walls that incloſed the hall and its garden till they were no longer viſible; then penſive, loſt in thought, ſhe joined not in the converſation,

of

of which, indeed, ſhe ſcarce was ſenſible, till her attention was recalled by Miſs Bertram lowering the window to look at the proſpect, which from the aſcent they had gained lay in full perſpective behind them.

Alicia again beheld the village and church of St. Mary Oak, where reſted the bones of her beloved, her unfortunate mother; the river too was ſeen meandering through the vale; there its glaſſy ſurface, reflecting the then ſcanty rays of ſunſhine, there cloſed in by high rocky banks, it flowed deep; removed from diſtant ſight; the peaked turrets of Oakdale, and one entire front were viſible, riſing out of the dark boſom of the ſurrounding wood.

"Adieu, (cried the lively Mary, as ſhe cloſed the window) never again do I deſire to behold thy thick walls, or the gloomy chambers they encircle, oh! thou hall of my anceſtors."

All ſmiled at the apoſtrophe, and William ſaid ſhe was under ſome obligation, however, to Oakdale, for ſhe appeared quite poetically inſpired.

" Inſpired, William, I am, with dread and horror, and no conſideration ſhall ever tempt me, again to viſit Oakdale; I ſhall not recover myſelf for ſome days."

" It was, Mary, you will recollect, your propoſal firſt, that we ſhould viſit it," ſaid Henry.

" Pray what ſudden diſlike is this, (enquired Sir Robert) you declared yourſelf delighted with the gloom of Oakdale this morning."

" Oh! I dare not, Sir Robert, tell you my reaſon; Henry and Willliam have teaſed me to death about it, and even Alicia, who ſaw it as well as I, denies what ſhe did ſee."

" Saw! ſaw what child, (ſaid the baronet) I hope there is not infection in the air of Oakdale, and that you have not already caught the idle

idle ſuperſtition which has ſeized the neighbourhood."

"I will inform you, Sir Robert, (ſaid his ſon) of the fright poor Mary got, who we all know choſe Sir Philip's chamber, in order to hold converſe with the ſpirits of her departed anceſtors; and, with Alicia, would look in that large glaſs, which hangs there, this morning; I was ordered to ſtand at ſome diſtance; ſo, whilſt ſhe did not obſerve what I was about, I lifted up a picture of ſome of the family, that had been placed againſt the wainſcot, which ſo terrified her that ſhe declared a ghoſt peeped over my ſhoulder."

"I did not ſay I ſaw a ghoſt brother; I only ſaid a face pale and frightful—and ſo it was frightful; and if you did this I think you were leſs excuſable than I was."

Sir Robert declared he was ſo far of Mary's opinion, and felt concerned to think Henry would trifle ſo childiſhly.

" Mary was, (ſaid her ladyſhip) puniſhed for the levity ſhe diſplayed on the ſubject; if ſhe was diveſted of a belief in ſupernatural appearances, why ſo terrified by Henry's frolic? for by daylight the moſt ſuperſtitious lay aſide their fears; but if ſhe entertains a belief, which her conduct this morning gives me reaſon to ſuppoſe ſhe does; how can we account for her chooſing to ſleep in an apartment to which ſuch ſtrange tales are annexed?"

Miſs Bertram frankly acknowledged ſhe had never thought upon the ſubject ſeriouſly; a ſufficient proof of which was her ſleeping when the ſtorm had waked every perſon the preceding night but herſelf; that ſhe was frightened by beholding ſomething in the glaſs, which ſhe did not believe was, as Henry averred, a picture; but that the glimpſe ſhe had of it, though ſufficient to terrify, yet was not ſufficient to convince her accurately of the nature of the appearance."

" I wiſh

"I wiſh you had, Mary, mentioned it to me, (ſaid the baronet) I then would have viſited the room, of which, when a boy, I recollect a ſervant belonging to St. Mary's telling me ſtrange tales; the deep impreſſion they then made is not perfectly obliterated."

Alicia was, though ſhe gave not her opinion, of the ſame way of thinking as Miſs Bertram, for where ſhe ſaw the face was alſo over Henry's ſhoulder; nor was the face ſhe ſaw in the leaſt reſembling that of the portrait which the preceding evening ſhe had obſerved for its beauty; but this was pale, with looſe diſhevelled hair, and as well as the tranſitory glimpſe ſhe had of it enabled her to judge, wore a countenance of fixed horror and deſpair. Certainly, thought ſhe it was the ſame I beheld during the night, and which, I was led to believe, or rather wiſhed to believe, was but an illuſion of my own imagination, oppreſſed as it had been by gloomy remembrances.—Sometimes ſhe meditated ſpeaking to Mr.

Bertram on the ſubject, yet that would infringe on her vow; for ſure this appearance was connected ſomehow with what her mother had diſcloſed to her aſtoniſhed ſight; but if ſo connected, it was a myſtery too horrid for her to dare penetrating, or even to think upon.

During the journey Mr. Bertram enquired of Sir Robert if he had found the papers he expected.

"Indeed, I have not, (the baronet replied) but from ſuch as I did find I have reaſon to fear the buſineſs may turn out more ſerious than I imagined."

At a late hour of dining they reached Malieveren, where Mr. Meynel had already arrived.

"Oh! thank heaven, Mr. Meynell, we have got ſafe back to the caſtle, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) where do you think we ſlept laſt night

night but at that horrid dungeon, that mauſoleum of joy, Oakdale hall."

Mr. Meynell's countenance betrayed much agitation, and heaving a deep ſigh as he turned to the fire, exclaimed, "a mauſoleum indeed, Miſs Bertram!"

During dinner Mr. Meynel appeared abſent and thoughtful, and ſcarce was the cloth removed when he and Sir Robert quitted the dining room; ſoon after Lady Bertram was deſired to attend them in the library, where they ſtaid two hours or more, and when they again joined the young people, the agitation of Mr. Meynell's countenance ſeemed to have now communicated itſelf to the baronet and his lady.

Sir Robert informed William that Mr. Meynell's chaiſe would be ready at ſix o'clock in the morning, when he was to accompany that gentlemen to London, whilſt you

you Henry, (he added) will follow with the ladies in a few days.

The reaſon of this ſudden removal was not even hinted at, and Sir Robert's manner awed even Miſs Bertram from enquiry. At an early hour they ſeparated, Mr. Meynell ſaying to Alicia, he would, when they met at Sir Robert's houſe in London, talk of her future plans.

Though Alicia was deſtitute of impertinent curioſity, yet ſhe could not avoid feeling her wonder completely rouſed by this ſudden departure of Sir Robert. Yet ſhe ſuppoſed it originated with the law ſuit that impended, and how far ſhe might be involved in that ſhe knew not; though ſomehow ſhe imagined herſelf connected with the Bertram family, ſhe had no clue to guide her various conjectures; her mother's parentage was well known at St. Mary's, therefore if any connexion ſubſiſted it muſt be through her father; yet it

was evident he had been a ſtranger to Sir Robert, but ſo cloſely was the veil of myſtery drawn over what had been partially diſcloſed, that, as the more ardent grew her wiſh to penetrate it, ſo the more obſcure it appeared to become, and in particular regarding the imaginary connection between her and the Bertrams, the idea of which firſt aroſe from a few words Mr. Kirby had ſaid; but, as ſhe reflected upon the indefinite expreſſion, and the difficulty ſhe found, if the Bertram's were alluded to, of reconciling it with probability; ſo incongruous did it ſeem, ſo wholly inconſiſtent, that as Alicia again reviewed the meaning of thoſe words, ſhe ſuppoſed herſelf miſtaken in the reference ſhe had made.

The day following the return of the family to Malieveren, Lady Bertram went, accompanied by her daughter, to call upon ſome neighbouring families, and Alicia, who was evidently though ſlightly indiſpoſed, not attending her ladyſhip, Henry inſiſted upon

upon ſtaying to bear her company. Alicia felt a kind of conſtraint, which ſhe imagined ſhe alſo ſaw in Mr. Bertrams manner.

They ſpoke of the law ſuit which threatened Sir Robert, but even his ſon knew not who was the claimant, nor had any certainty regarding the cauſe of the Baronet's ſudden departure from the caſtle. Their converſation next turned upon Oakdale, and the fright Miſs Bertram had ſuſtained from having beheld the pale ghaſtly face in the glaſs which hung in Sir Philip's chamber; but Alicia reſolved to conceal even from Henry what her opinion was regarding the cauſe of her friends alarm and her own.

" I ſaw, (ſaid Mr. Bertram) you wiſhed no kind of enquiry to be made, therefore hurried Mary into the garden, without allowing time for explanation to Lady Bertram; and deviſed the tale regarding Dame Gertrude's portrait, to prevent thoſe which might hereafter have been made. Excuſe

me

me, Alicia, if I ſay you perhaps yet are not an orphan;—that in Sir Philips room,—or ſome adjoining one——but I have done!"

"Oh! Henry, why I was alarmed, ſeek not to learn; I have, indeed, weighty reaſons;—but Sir Philip's chamber, alas! contains no parent now for the ſad Alicia; but ſpeak not to me on this ſubject, I conjure you; your kind, your partial attention may make me forget how I am bound."

"I obey, Alicia, yet deem me, though condemned to ſilence, not inſenſible to your ſufferings; believe me not inſenſible to your merit, and rely on my wiſhes to ſerve you; if ever you deem me worthy of your confidence, truſt to the friendſhip——"

Henry pauſed, the words died on his lips; he would have added, to friendſhip—love—an expreſſion oft before uſed to Alicia, but then to convey a different ſignification; for now, though not articulated ſo as to reach her ears, a bluſh of conſciouſneſs overſpread his fine features, and his eyes, averted

averted from her face, were caſt on the carpet; but the fair companion of Henry ſaw not the confuſion he felt, and replied to the unfiniſhed ſpeech.

"I do, (ſaid ſhe) deem you worthy of my confidence; fully do I rely on your honour—firmly do I truſt to your friendſhip; ah! Henry, would to heaven you could ſhare with me the ſecret which oppreſſes my heart, then would I appear to you as I really am, diveſted of the ſtrange myſtery which envelopes my fate, even from myſelf."

CHAPTER XIV.

IT perhaps may appear ſtrange that Alicia ſhould, with Henry, feel that perfect confidence ſhe repoſed in no other perſon; and that, urged by this feeling, ſhe had in ſome degree even violated her promiſe, by imparting to him what ſhe had ſo carefully concealed from Mr. Meynell and Lady Bertram.

I do not pretend to define cauſes, though I may make a conjecture, as I deſcribe the effect. The amiable diſpoſition, the various talents, accompliſhments, and elegant manners

ners of Mr. Bertram, with the lively intereſt he took in whatever concerned our heroine, muſt doubtleſs have influenced her in his favor, without reckoning upon thoſe perſonal graces of face and figure which ſurely ought; in forming a friendſhip, but eſpecially one between the two ſexes, to have no weight. William, equal in every thing to Henry, paid not thoſe ſilent, yet marked attentions to her; and Mary, lively to an extreme, was too volatile for to tempt confidence, though her temper was amiable and her heart good. Miſs Bertram's underſtanding was not as Henry's, an elevated one; and her manner, although ſhe was older than Alicia, was trifling, and oft childiſh; thus at Oakdale the kind, the ſoothing attentions of Mr. Bertram threw Alicia off her guard, and ſhe momentarily forgot that reſerve ſhe had been commanded to maintain. The firſt ſtep taken, ſhe had a painful ſtruggle to avoid the temptation that preſented itſelf, to repoſe in the ſympathiſing heart of Henry Bertram the myſ-

terious

terious ſorrows which ſo deeply at Oakdale agitated her.

At Mrs. Selden's Alicia had formed no friendſhip; the only young perſon there ſhe had ever known, who particularly intereſted her, was Miſs Olivia Harman, who had ſo generouſly protected her, but ſhe left the ſchool, ere the attention ſhe ſo kindly paid our heroine had time to ripen into friendſhip; therefore deprived by this circumſtance of that young lady's future acquaintance, and perſecuted, nay almoſt deſerted by the girls of her own age for a time; when the tide of favour again turned, and Miſs Aiſlabie was neglected; Alicia courted and careſſed, ſhe carefully avoided any degree of intimacy with her mutable companions, except ſuch as politeneſs and the natural gentleneſs and amiability of her own heart urged; thus, as to all ſhe was alike attentive, all were ſatisfied, as no one enjoyed in the heart of Miſs Sleigh an excluſive preference. Henry Bertram's obtaining a preference

ference in our heroine's affections is therefore not to be wondered at, for in his ſociety ſhe felt a degree of animated pleaſure, ſhe, till then, had been eſtranged from; amuſive and inſtructive, the converſations ſhe held with Henry on thoſe points of education, which, as yet, were unfiniſhed by practical ſtudy, formed, perhaps, the baſis of the friendſhip ſhe felt; for ſo ſtudious did he appear for her improvement in thoſe branches of knowledge in which he was a proficient, ſo gentle were his precepts, ſo elegant, yet ſo clear was the language in which he conveyed inſtruction; that, as Alicia liſtened, as the leſſons ſunk with the graceful manner of her preceptor on a heart tender and amiable; ſhe, relying on the virtues, on the honour of Henry Bertram, thought not of the difference fortune had made, but choſe, as the friend beſt able to direct, moſt willing to ſoothe or conſole, the heir of Sir Robert Bertram, though ſhe was but a dependant on the charity of Mr. Dalrymple.

That

That Henry delighted in the company of Alicia, in the chearful converſations he held in her ſociety; or that, by degrees he had in a manner aſſumed the office of preceptor to her, will not ſeem wonderful, as I remark that Mr. Bertram's mind was yet unvitiated—that yet he had mingled with no women but of reputation—and amongſt thoſe whoſe age approached his own, he had ſeen none ſo amiable as Alicia, none ſo beautiful, at leaſt ſo he imagined. This however is certain, for none had he felt himſelf ſo intereſted; and to befriend the lovely, — the amiable — and almoſt deſerted orphan, appeared to the romantic ſoul of Henry the firſt of his enjoyments; her artleſs yet unreſtrained expreſſions of the firm confidence ſhe felt in his friendſhip, and the ſtrange myſtery that was half unfolded to his view, made him aſſume a kind of tenderneſs in his manner to Alicia, but he did not imagine he felt any other ſentiment than friendſhip for her, before they were at Oakdale; even there he was ſcarce ſenſible of the nature of his feeling; nor, till the converſation he held with her, after

their

their return to Malieveren, was he ſenſible of the change, if indeed a change it was.

Three days only intervened between Sir Robert's quitting Malieveren and the departure of his lady, who, accompanied by her ſon and daughter, with Alicia, ſafely reached Sir Roberts houſe in London, where they learned William March was ſet out for France.

" For France! (echoed Mary)."

" Who, (enquired Lady Bertram) has accompanied him."

Mr. Meynell, (ſaid Sir Robert) inſiſted upon going, but I could by no means conſent to a journey ſo improper for his very advanced age, and therefore propoſed Mr. Blackmore, the late tutor to the young men; but the Earl of Knaveſborough kindly offered himſelf to accompany William, ſaying, that though I was too nearly intereſted to be of the party, yet it ought to be a perſon of conſequence that went, whoſe preſence might be a check

upon the insinuations which might be made to William by this fellow Ayscough; also a check upon the arts of his base employer, for such doubtless there is.' I listened, (continued the baronet) to the generous proposal, and his lordship and his charge set out this morning."

"'Tis sudden, indeed, (said Henry) may I presume now to enquire if this journey relates to the lawsuit of which you spoke, Sir Robert."

"It does, Henry, yet so perplexed, so intricate at Malieveren the whole seemed, so agitated I felt on the subject, that I deferred an explanation with you, till I better knew how the affair stood, which I will now communicate, as you are equally concerned with myself."

Alicia rose to withdraw, but the good baronet begged she would be again seated, as he by no means wished to exclude her from the knowledge of what he was about to say.

" Before I quitted Malieveren for Bertram Caſtle, I had ſome intimations of a claim that was about to be made for the Oakdale and Northumberland eſtates; the claimant I was told was a perſon nearly of my own age, but this intimation I diſregarded, being ſatisfied no title could be clearer than what I held my eſtates by; my father had long ſurvived his two younger brothers, who were not any more than my aunt Mildred ever married. My grandfather, Sir Henry, was an only child, and I now, with my children, are the only remains of a family never very numerous, as I have great reaſon to ſuppoſe the ſon of my ſiſter, (who alone with myſelf ſurvived infancy out of a numerous iſſue) has long ſince fallen a victim to his vices; as, on his father's return, every enquiry poſſible was made, not only in this kindom, but alſo in France, where he had reſided; and as riches and reſtoration to his parent were the allurements held out, had he lived, long, many years ago would he have claimed thoſe advantages; but when he

he quitted Paris, it was ſuppoſed he could not ſurvive many months. Why I am ſo particular, (continued the baronet) regarding this perſon is, that Mr. Meynell, who has ſuffered much remorſe, as accuſing himſelf as the primary cauſe of his ſons ill conduct, ſtarted an idea, that this claimant might be my nephew; but it had a riſe in a hope of again beholding, however depraved, the ſon whoſe childhood he recalled as amiable. The folly of ſuch a claim deſtroyed with me all probability of Mr. Meynell's having conjectured rightly, and I ſcarce, when at Bertram caſtle, ſhould have recalled the hints I had received, had it not been for what happened two days after our arrival there.

"I was ſeated in the library, examining ſome plans regarding the improvement I am making, when a ſervant informed me a gentleman and lady in a chaiſe and four had drove into the back court, and begged to ſee me, but would not ſend their names.—I told James to give my compliments, and to

deſire they would alight; ere I had time to reflect on the ſingularity of refuſing to give their names, James returned, and announced the lady, who cloſely followed him; ſhe was a tall elegant figure, clad in deep mourning, with a veil that fell almoſt to the ground; this ſhe threw back, when James quitted the room, and diſcovered a face extremely handſome, which I could diſtinguiſh, though it was nearly duſk.

'You appear, ſaid ſhe, ſurpriſed, yet ſure this face cannot, and ſhe ſighed deeply, be forgot by Sir Robert Bertram.'

'I am very ſorry, ſaid I, bowing to acknowledge madam, if ever your face was known to me, I am now ſo unfortunate as not to recollect it.'

'What ſay you, Sir Robert, not recollect me?'

'Favor me with your name, you now have the advantage.'

'Twice has my name been changed, my face is nearly the ſame; ſtill do you ſay you know me not?'

'Upon

'Upon my honor, madam, I do not, and wiſh to be informed why I am favored with this viſit from a perſon to whom at preſent I ſuppoſe myſelf a ſtranger.'

'Your honor, Sir Robert, will ſhortly be put to the teſt; if it ſtands that teſt it will ſave you much needleſs trouble and expence; even now had you choſe to remember me, it would have ſaved much vexation; to avoid which I viſited you, but now you ſhun the explanation I came to make. Now, Sir Robert, I bid you conſider whither this denial of your knowledge will lead you; dearly will you repent when in a court of juſtice you muſt anſwer to the accuſation that will be made, and your lands —your title go to their legal heir.'

"Amazed at this accuſation, I attempted not to detain her, as throwing her veil over her face ſhe haſtily quitted the room.—Recovering my ſurpriſe, I followed, but ere I reached the door which opens into the court, the carriage in which ſhe had reſeated herſelf was driving through the gates. When

I reflected on ſo ſudden, ſo ſtrange a viſit I could ſcarce believe that I was awake.—Recovering, however, my ſurpriſe, I ſent a ſervant to follow the carriage, of which, however, he could gain no information, the enquiries made at the neighbouring towns were equally fruitleſs. Certain now ſome ſcheme was on foot, though ignorant of what was the exact nature of the pretended claim, I wrote to my ſolicitor in London regarding the former intelligence I had received from him. I learned, on the day preceding the arrival of my letter, he had received certain intelligence of ſome claim being about to be made, but that, as yet, he was wholly ignorant upon what it was founded. Intending therefore to come to London, prepared with all the particular information I could gather concerning every branch of the family, I ſearched at Bertram caſtle for ſome papers I imagined I ſhould have found there; in this not ſucceeding as I hoped, I expected that at Oakdale they would be met with, and there, though I found

found not what I ſought, yet I chanced to light upon ſome letters of my fathers to my aunt of a ſtrange import, if I comprehend them right; but they are worded in ſo myſterious a way that I, who have no clue to the ſtory, can by no means comprehend them, further than to ſay they have given me ſerious uneaſineſs. From this was my attention recalled by a letter which lay at Malieveren waiting my arrival, containing a notice of the ſuit that was about to be inſtituted againſt me and Lady Bertram for the Malieveren eſtates, enjoyed by her ladyſhip as ſuppoſed heireſs to her brother the late Lord Malieveren; but that his lordſhip's true heir, an only ſon born in wedlock, was found, and to him were the eſtates to be delivered up; for him his maternal uncle. a perſon of the name of Ayſcough, had, as the heir was yet a minor, inſtituted the ſuit."

"But who, Sir Robert, was ſaid to be the heir?"

"Who Henry? your friend, the worthy, the amiable William March, is pitched upon as the pretended heir to the title and eſtate of your uncle, and thus have my enemies choſe by this way to wound me in every quarter at once."

"But ſure, ſir, (ſaid Miſs Bertram) William does not, cannot believe the tale, he does not league with your enemies."

"No, Mary! I truſt the principles of William are too deeply rooted in virtue to be led aſtray by the dazzling allurements which will be held out to him; and the clear perception, the unbiaſſed underſtanding that diſtinguiſhes him, will prevent his falling into the ſnare prepared to work his ruin, and thus give pain to us all, and that he will avoid the various artifices by which he will be encompaſſed; to diſappoint the hopes I have indulged regarding him, would give equal pleaſure to my enemy as grief to me. But the letter I received at Malieveren was not the only information I received regarding this iniquitous affair, for ſuch I deem it.—

Mr.

Mr. Meynell, who reached the caſtle before us, had met at York with a Mr. Evans, a lawyer of ſome eminence, who had at times tranſacted buſineſs for Mr. Meynel, who expreſſed his ſurpriſe at ſeeing him in that city. Mr. Evans then informed him he had come into the north in order to collect evidence for one of the moſt important trials which had appeared before any court of judicature for ſome time; he then, at Mr. Meynell's requeſt, informed him that the ſuit was inſtituted againſt Sir Robert and Lady Bertram, for withholding the eſtates of Malieveren from the lawful heir.

'And who, (enquired Mr. Meynell,) is that heir? I always underſtood, that although the title was extinct, Lady Bertram was the heir at law had not Lord Malieveren, by will, conſtituted her ſo.'

'But then, (replied Mr. Evans) if a ſon of Lord Malieveren exiſts.'

'No ſuch ſon, (replied Mr. Meynell) I preſume could inherit, as Lord Malieveren was never married.'

'To prove that his lordſhip actually was, ſaid Mr. Evans) is now my principal buſineſs in the north; my client informs me that Lord Malieveren died before he acknowledged his wife publickly, but revealed his marriage when on his death bed to Sir Robert and Lady Bertram. Unconſcious of the death of her lord, (to whom ſhe was ſuppoſed haſtening) Lady Malieveren was travelling towards London from the North, was ſuddenly taken ill, and at a poor cottage ſafely delivered of a fine boy; but this child was concealed by the ſervants who Lady Bertram had placed about Lady Malieveren; the people of the cottage were alſo bribed, and ſhe was informed the infant was ſtill born.—By this means Lady Bertram remained the heireſs of her brother, whoſe unhappy wife was alſo, by no proviſion being made, at leaſt none that was produced, become a poor dependant on the bounty of the Bertram's, for ſhe was ignorant how far the right ſhe had would go, and accepting a certain ſum quitted England; her child

was

was for ſome time brought up in privacy, but Lady Bertram not willing wholly to deſert it, had the hapleſs infant expoſed by the road-ſide, near where ſhe with Sir Robert paſſed; ſhe inſtantly adopted the child, giving him the name of the month in which he was found, and he has, by the name of March, received an education which will fit him for his ſtation.'

'But how came the diſcovery to be made,' enquired Mr. Meynel.

'It is a long tale, (replied Evans) but the diſcovery was made to Mr. Ayſcough, who is the brother of Lady Malieveren; but was abroad at the period I ſpeak of, he has only lately returned, indeed, from the Eaſt, where he has, I find, acquired a conſiderable fortune, which he informs me he will freely ſpend to procure his nephew juſtice. He it is who inſtituted the neceſſary enquiry; the cottagers are ready to ſwear to the birth of the child, and had we but the certificate, I dread not a defeat for my client.'

"Mr. Meynell quitted York, and impatiently waited my return to Malieveren, whilſt the ſame day Evans, ſummoned by Aſcough, went South. It was neceſſary to go to London; I wiſhed William not to be informed of particulars till I arrived there, and I received other information, I took him with me, that as early as poſſible I might learn his ſentiments. To you, my children, or to you, Miſs Sleigh, I truſt all vindication on this ſubject is needleſs."

"That Lord Malieveren was gay and diſſipated, (ſaid Lady Bertram) alas! I am too well convinced; yet that he had a ſoul capable of abandoning a woman he had thought worthy of bearing his name, I can no more credit than I truſt you can the enormous crime of which I am accuſed!—No! the heart of my unfortunate brother was not abandoned ſo far!—No! he would have ſhrunk from ſuch a deed! He carefully provided before his deceaſe for two children who had no legal claim upon his fortune, then could he poſſibly have deſerted a woman he had made his wife? But this is of a piece

with the reſt of the villainous tale, and like it, will be proved falſe."

"You all know of Williams being found, I dare ſay, ſaid Sir Robert, a little diſtance from Rippon, wrapped in rags; one ſervant, James, yet remains in the houſe, who attended us that day, and every ſearch which was then made for his parents failed of ſucceſs. The whole of this affair is the work of malice, cool, deliberate, and diabolical: nor can I heſitate in affirming I know that the quarter in which the plan has originated is too fruitful in expedients for me to hope the affair will quickly terminate, and tho' certain of the falſity of the claim, I yet muſt remain long uncertain of the iſſue of a ſuit, where no expence will be ſpared by my antagoniſt, and where it is certain wretches are already bribed to ſwear whatever is dictated to them."

"That it proceeds from malice, (ſaid Henry) is certified by the ſuit being changed, which doubtleſs was intended at firſt to claim the Bertram eſtates, though now the pretenſions

tenſions are levelled againſt thoſe of Malieveren; has this Ayſcough proved his relationſhip to the pretended heir?"

"Yes, (replied Sir Robert) that is already done, and he claims the guardianſhip of the heir for the mock Lady Malieveren, to bring whom over to England, and a ſervant, who is alſo to prove the marriage, is William gone. Ayſcough propoſed at firſt going alone for this purpoſe, but my lawyer ſaid it would be requiſite ſome one ſhould accompany him, as a witneſs upon my ſide, to prevent colluſion. Ayſcough then ſaid his nephew, for ſo he ſtiles him, might accompany him, and any other perſon I ſhould pleaſe to appoint, that all matters might be carried fairly; William then would meet his mother, where nature would not be warped by the imaginary gratitude he ſuppoſed my right, and yet ſome one would be preſent leſs nearly intereſted, who in court would be conſidered as an impartial evidence. Such were the reaſons that influenced me to conſent to the joutney being made by William.

liam. The Earl of Knaſborough and Mr. Blackmore, who when he learned the occaſion offered himſelf, filled one chaiſe, James and his lordſhip's ſervant another, whilſt Ayſcough followed with two people in a third."

"It is indeed, (ſaid Alicia, who as yet had not ſpoke on the ſubject) it is indeed moſt cruel to fix upon Mr. March as an inſtrument of theſe diabolical ſchemes; if I might venture to give my opinion, I ſhould ſay ſome latent and as yet undiſcovered cauſe muſt have induced them to change the direction of the law-ſuit, and that William for ſome reaſon is obnoxious to thoſe who wiſh to make him the inſtrument of their malice, and thus at once is your peace deſtroyed, and (as they hope) the future proſpects of the unfortunate William; yet this, it is evident, is a recent idea, and I therefore think his ruin is the aim at which thoſe wretches aſpire, perhaps more than what anxiety it may coſt the family, whoſe eſtates they, falſely claim."

Sir Robert roſe with an expreſſion upon his countenance Alicia had never before obſerved it wear, it was indignation mixed with rage. "Thank you, (he ſaid) Miſs Sleigh, I ſee it in the ſame light now you have given the hint. It muſt be ſo, I am convinced, every thing proves it."

"Yet why ſhould this unfortunate young man, Sir Robert, be the object of diſlike to any one? it is but through him, (ſaid Lady Bertram) you are wounded, and if he falls, he falls a victim to the diabolical wiſh of vengeance thoſe wretches have formed againſt you, for who but he can have harboured ſuch a wiſh."

"It is evident the ruin of William is alſo aimed at; wretch! (exclaimed Sir Robert) he could never have offended! he never, as I did, thwarted thee! But yet, (he continued, raiſing his voice) deteſted, abandoned wretch! Yet, I truſt in God, who knows the extent of thy crimes, that even in this world they will meet detection; that even here thou ſhalt be covered with obloquy

and

and ſcorn—that thy infernal ſchemes ſhall ere long rebound on thy devoted head—and even by the vicious ſhalt thou be marked out as an object of hatred—the wrath of heaven will not ſleep for ever—the ſtroke is but deferred!"

Sir Robert was about to quit the apartment, when Lady Bertram roſe, and laying her hand on the lock, ſaid, with an air of reſolution, "whither is it you go?"

"Detain me not, Frances!' replied the baronet.

"Say then, why you ſo haſtily quit us? recollect, Sir Robert, the hour."

"There are weighty reaſons, Lady Bertram, (replied the Baronet) why I ſhould again examine the evidence who ſpoke to the birth of William March, (perhaps we have treated the affair too lighly)."

"But not to night, (ſaid her ladyſhip) it is much too late, Sir Robert, to-morrow will be the ſame if ſtill they reſolve to perjure themſelves.

The

The baronet grew more compoſed, and was again ſeated.

Though they continued to converſe till a late hour, no other topic was diſcuſſed, although this was varied.

" Yet, (ſaid Sir Robert to Henry) you are inexperienced, my ſon in the world; you have *heard* of its arts—of its villanies—but you have not found their effects; long may you continue a ſtranger to what I have felt—may you be bleſſed as I was in a friend—and oh! may heaven avert from you the deep ſenſe of miſery that I have ſuſtained on that friends account—may you never behold that friend as I beheld——"

The good baronet ſeemed for a few minutes too agitated to proceed, then recovering himſelf, continued.

" No, my ſon, for you I truſt no ſuch trial is reſerved; you know the ſilence I have

have impoſed on myſelf concerning the ſubject—you know the exertions I have made—you are alſo conſcious that as I attempted to unmaſk villainy, I wounded myſelf.—The wretch whom I hate and deteſt laughs at my efforts—and knows his ſecurity—knows that in attacking him I ſhall but wound the reputation of my friend, therefore I am and will be ſilent; but now I was betrayed to ſpeak on this hateful ſubject by the late events raiſing a ſuſpicion of their origin."

Sir Robert ſpoke during the evening of William's reluctance to the journey he had undertaken. "It will, (ſaid he) appear as if deſtitute of gratitude to thoſe benefactors to whom I owe life—infinitely more than life—as if I wiſhed to countenance the unjuſt claim which is made by villains envious of the good fortune I enjoy."

"He fell (ſaid Sir Robert) at my feet, imploring I would allow him publicly to diſavow the proceedings made in his name.

"I

'I will loudly, (ſaid he) proclaim my obligations, my gratitude, your charitable benevolence.' 'No, William, this ſhall not, muſt not be. I inſiſt upon your complying with what this Ayſcough requires; accompany him to France—it is not by ſhunning inquiry that my honour will be cleared—no, the law now muſt inveſtigate the whole—there is no alternative left; by delay my character, which as yet has been unſullied, may ſuffer; it is now only to a fair, open, public trial I truſt for proving my integrity. It is not in your power, by ſaying I preſerved your life—by proclaiming I have beſtowed on you an education equal to that I have given my heir—that my name will remain unſullied. Theſe might well be judged a trifling recompence for the lands of Malieveren, which I have enjoyed ſince about the period you were born.'

'But hear me, Sir Robert, (ſaid the generous youth) remember my inexperience—recollect I muſt be expoſed to artful people who will doubtleſs ſeek how to work my ruin;

ruin; by wanting knowledge of the world I may be impoſed upon by their arts.—I am not deſtitute of ambition—alas! I tremble—I dare not truſt myſelf!"

"This diffidence, (continued Sir Robert) I aſſured him made me but the more firmly truſt in thoſe principles I had taken care to have implanted in his heart, and bade him ſpeak without reſerve to thoſe friends who accompanied him. Yet he was not encouraged, and this morning he ſorrowfully bade me adieu.

CHAPTER XV.

THE day following Lady Bertrams arrival in town, at Sir Robert's requeſt his ſolicitor waited upon the lawyer who was employed for Ayſcough, ſignifying the baronet's deſire to ſee the witneſſes who were to ſwear to the birth of the pretended heir.

"This, (ſaid Mr. Evans) is a requeſt I am not bound to comply with; yet, to ſhew your client our claims are not ſlightly founded, and as Mr. Ayſcough wiſhes no concealment to be made, I will this inſtant accompany

accompany you to hear what thoſe two ſimple folks ſay; then, if Sir Robert is not ſatisfied with your report, he may afterwards viſit them."

This propoſal was agreed to, and the two gentlemen of the law proceeded to a very good houſe in ſpring gardens, which Mr. Ayſcough had hired, it ſeemed, ſome time before, and in which he reſided at the time he went to France. Here Mr. Raynton, Sir Robert's lawyer, was introduced to a well cloathed man and woman, whoſe ſimple tale was told in the broadeſt Yorkſhire dialect.—It conſiſted in a recital of what Mr. Meynell had, at York, learned from Mr. Evans:—"that a lady had been, (they ſaid) taken to their houſe by another lady and gentleman, though the firſt was the miſtreſs; and that the gentleman went to the next town for aſſiſtance, (as he ſaid) but ſtaid ſo long that the child was born before he came back; that it was a fine boy, though the lady had been told it was ſtill born;

born; that the perſon who attended the lady gave the women of the cottage money to aſſiſt in the fraud; that the lady was ſoon ſo far recovered as to leave the cottage, where the child ſtill remained. After ſome months had paſſed, the man who was with the lady returned, ſaying he had come for the infant; that the woman was unwilling to part with it, but he took it from her, and ſtripping it, put ſome old rags about it, then wrapping his great coat over it, and leaving his horſe, walked away, followed, though unſeen, by the owner of the cottage; that he laid it under a buſh, cloſe by the road to Rippon, and ran back to the horſe, which mounting, he galloped off. The coach of Sir Robert Bertram, (continued the apparently artleſs narrator) was driving up, and her ladyſhip bade the carriage ſtop, and the child was taken in."

This was the chief ſubſtance of what, after much tedious delivery, Mr. Raynton obtained,

obtained, who informed them Sir Robert would viſit them that day or the next.

" Ah! God bleſs his Honour, (ſaid the man) I wiſh this young Lord may ever do the good he has done."

" But let him have his right, and then we will know, (ſaid his wife); but ſeldom comes a better, as the ſaying is. What, mayhap, ye think I do not know Sir Robert or my Lady, but you are miſtaken—what, when I was bred, born, and brought up, as I may ſay, in Malieveren pariſh.—Aye, many a 'How do you, Barbara?' have I had in my time from her Ladyſhip; I am ſure I am very ſorry, and had it not been as how Mr. Ayſcough was thrown off his horſe juſt at our door, I would never have told, for I am ſure we were well paid, were we not Johnny? But was it not very miraculous that the very lady's brother his ownſelf ſhould be ſo unfortunate as to fall?"

" Very miraculous, indeed, (ſaid Mr. Raynton) but have you told me all you know regarding this affair."

" No, no, we know a great deal beſides, but nobody ſhall know nothing at all beſides till the trial; then, tell Sir Robert, all ſhall out."

The Baronet, at Mr. Raynton's return, with Mr. Meynel and Henry, reſolved to loſe no time in viſiting thoſe people; but, when they reached Spring Gardens, they were informed by a ſervant that the people they ſought had quitted the houſe ſoon after them. Mortified at this diſappointment, they drove to Mr. Evans's, who either could not, or would not, give any intelligence.—The next day, however, he attended Sir Robert to Ayſcough's houſe, where they were informed the witneſſes had ſet out in a chaiſe the preceding evening about duſk, and left a meſſage for Mr. Evans, the import of which was that they would anſwer no more queſtions till the trial, and that then they

would appear, Mr. Ayſcough knowing where they might be found; that a chaiſe had been obſerved to drive from this houſe in the duſk, was confirmed by ſeveral people.

Sir Robert, convinced that all enquiry would be needleſs, as whoever had thus ſpirited them away would doubtleſs conceal them, took no further ſtep in the affair.

Mrs. Selden had fixed on a freſh place of reſidence, and her ſchool was re-eſtabliſhed; but Lady Bertram propoſed to Mr. Meynel, if agreeable to Alicia, ſhe ſhould for the future ſeek no home but her houſe; to this our heroine could form no reaſonable objection, and gratefully accepted the propoſal on this condition, that if hereafter her Weſt Indian friends approved her determination. She was at this time flattering herſelf with beholding thoſe friends, as Mrs. Dalrymple's letters ſpoke with almoſt certainty of Mr. Dalrymple's having put his

affairs in ſuch a train as would ſpeedily allow of their quitting Jamaica.

From Calais Sir Robert and Henry had letters; the former from the Earl of Knaſborough, which informed him he had juſt heard his ſon Lord Morville was wounded, and it was feared dangerouſly; to him he muſt haſten, therefore he was obliged to relinquiſh the charge he had undertaken. Mr. Blackmore, he doubted not, would do every thing in his power, and that Ayſcough as yet had not offered to intrude himſelf upon William.—From his friend the account Henry received was much the ſame, only mentioning the route they meant to take, and the time when he hoped to return.

Sir Robert and his ſon had few leiſure hours, as the lawſuit engroſſed a large portion of every day in collecting evidences, examining them, and conſulting the

the gentlemen of the long robe, amongſt whom already no inconſiderable ſum had been divided; but this was a trifle to the Baronet, and had never coſt him a moment's uneaſineſs; but it was, (he ſaid) the ſtab his character had received. Ayſcough, would he ſometimes ſay, though a villain himſelf, was doubtleſs only a tool in the hand of ſome other, who lurked in ambuſh unſeen, yet was the moving ſpirit.

Doubly keen was Lady Bertram's feelings; her own, her huſband's character at ſtake, and the memory of an imprudent, though beloved, and in many ways amiable brother, blackened by a ſtigma ſhe was perfectly convinced was as undeſerved as ſhe judged it infamous.

From every town they had ſtopped at in their road to Soiſſons, where the ſuppoſed mother of Mr. March, it was ſaid, reſided, either he or Mr. Blackmore had written; all had

had gone ſmoothly on, and they were daily expected in England, although no letter had reached Sir Robert or his family from the end of their journey.

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